



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

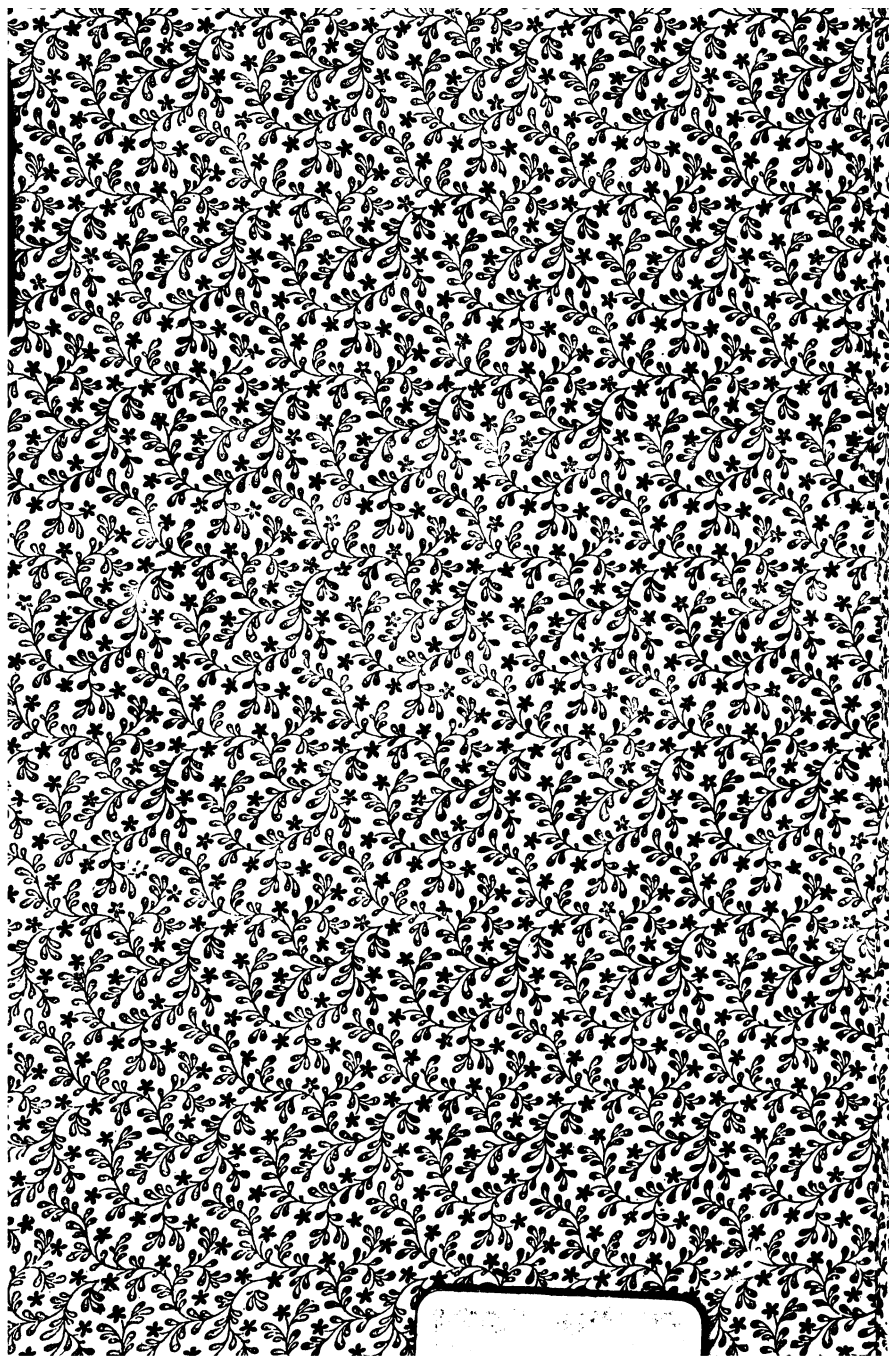
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

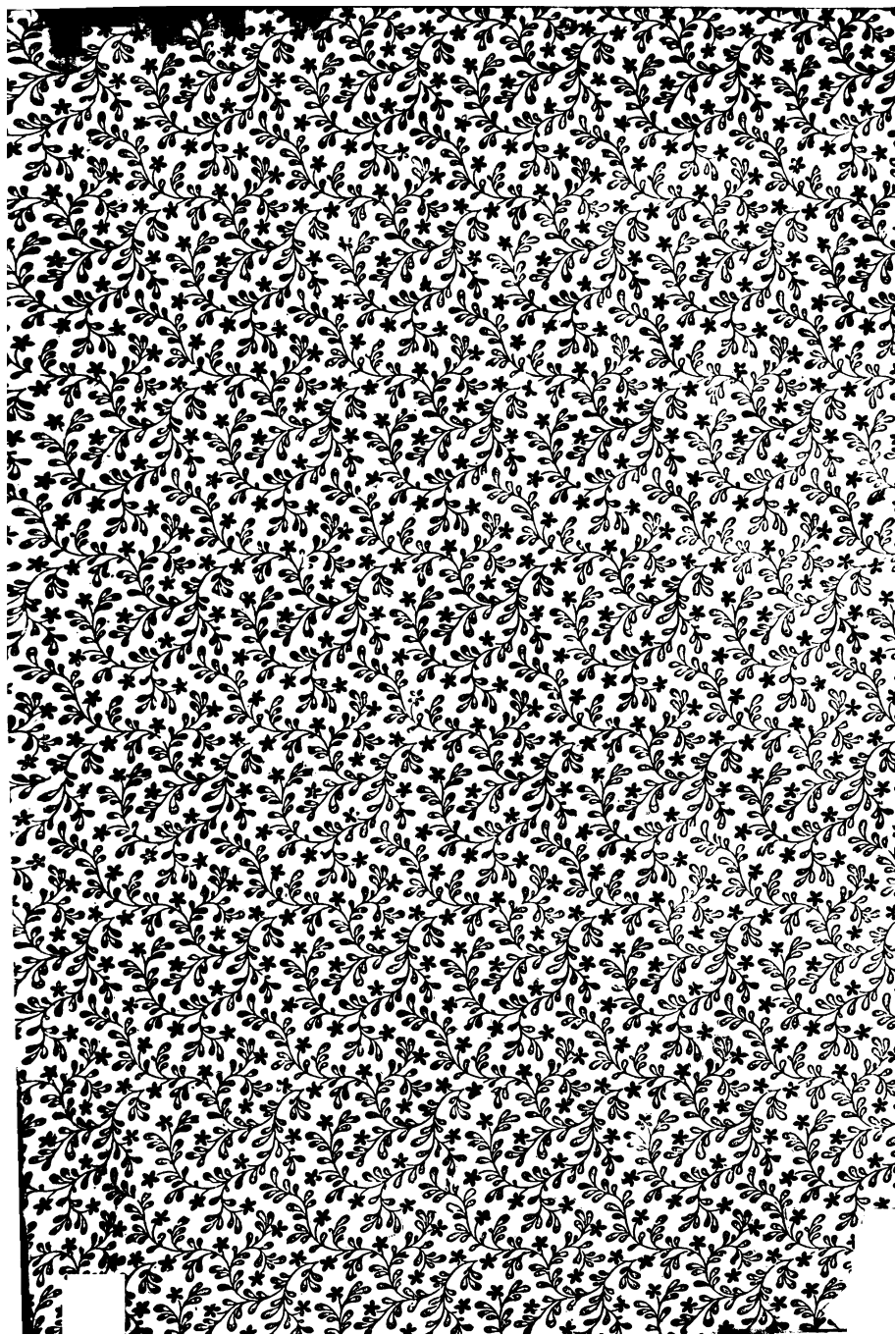
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

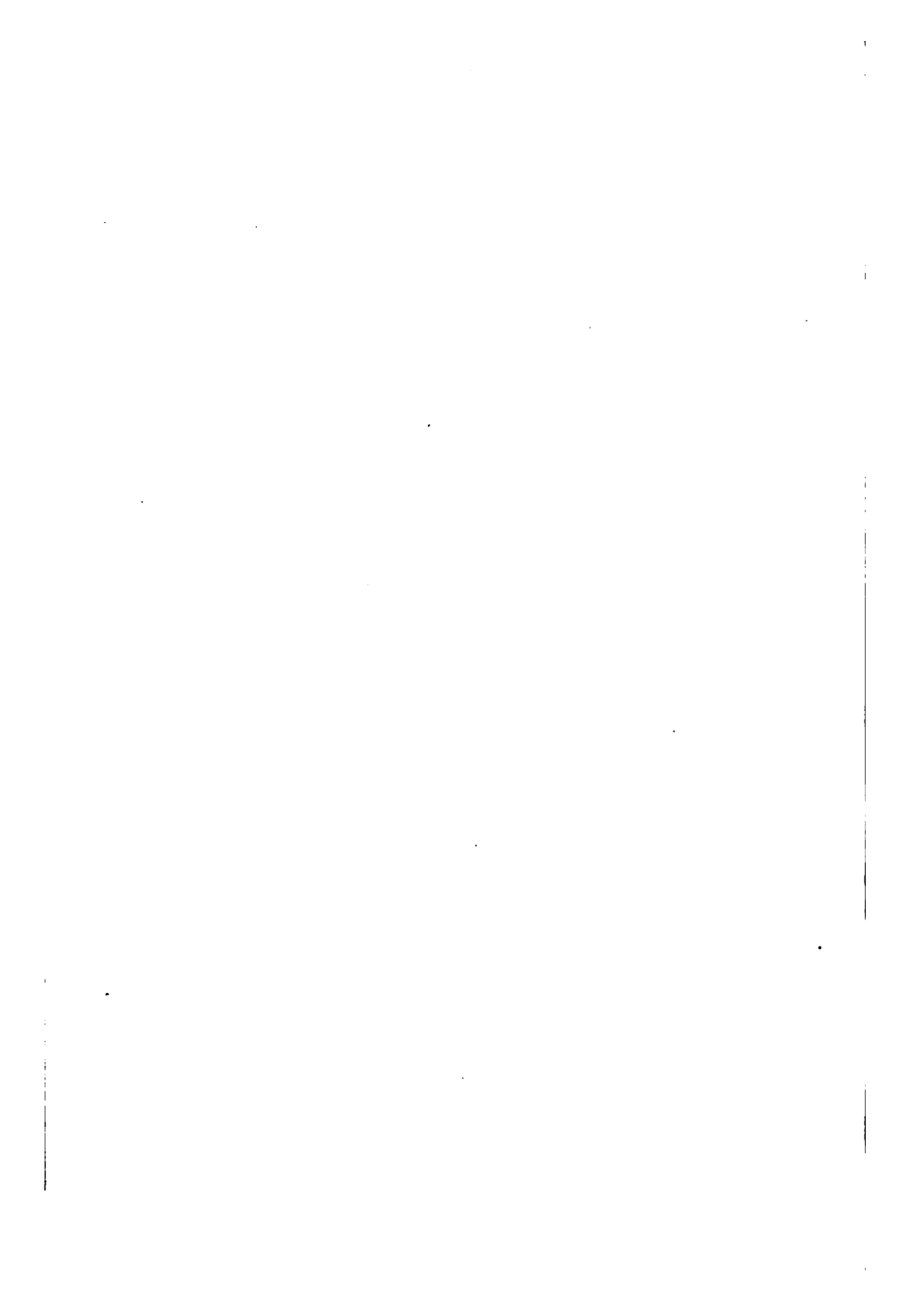
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







VILLAGE PREACHING
FOR A YEAR.
Second Series.



Village Preaching for a Year.

SECOND SERIES.

VOL. II.

TRINITY TO ADVENT.

BY THE

REV. S. BARING GOULD, M.A.,

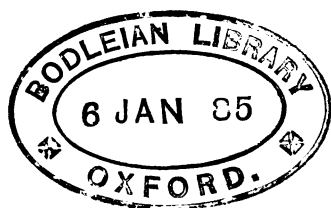
AUTHOR OF "A FIRST SERIES OF VILLAGE PREACHING FOR A YEAR,"
"VILLAGE PREACHING FOR SAINTS' DAYS," "THE VILLAGE PULPIT, A COURSE
OF SHORT OUTLINE SERMONS FOR THE YEAR," "THE PREACHERS' POCKET,"
"THE MYSTERY OF SUFFERING," "SERMONS TO CHILDREN," "SERMONS
ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS," &c.

London:

SKEFFINGTON & SON, 163, PICCADILLY.

1884.

101. e. 17



Contents.

	PAGE
THE HOLY TRINITY (<i>Trinity Sunday.</i>)	1
S. MATT. XXVIII. 19.	
"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."	
THE VISION OF GOD ... (<i>First Sunday after Trinity.</i>)	9
S. LUKE XVI. 24.	
"I am tormented in this flame."	
THE CALL TO THE SUPPER (<i>Second Sunday after Trinity.</i>)	17
S. LUKE XIV. 17.	
"Come; for all things are now ready."	
SCANDAL-TAKING ... (<i>Third Sunday after Trinity.</i>)	25
S. LUKE XV. 2.	
"This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."	
FAITH (<i>Fourth Sunday after Trinity.</i>)	33
HEB. XI. 6.	
"Without Faith it is impossible to please God."	
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH	
(<i>Fifth Sunday after Trinity.</i>) 42	
S. LUKE XVII. 5.	
"The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our Faith."	
HOPE (<i>Sixth Sunday after Trinity.</i>)	50
ROM. VIII. 24.	
"We are saved by Hope"	

SERMON HEARING ... (*Seventh Sunday after Trinity.*) 58

S. MARK VIII. 2.

"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat."

A GOOD LIFE ... (*Eighth Sunday after Trinity.*) 66

S. MATT. VII. 17.

"Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

EVERYTHING COMES TO LIGHT

(*Ninth Sunday after Trinity.*) 74

S. LUKE XVI. 1.

"There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

VISITATIONS ... (*Tenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 82

S. LUKE XIX. 44.

"Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

JUDGING OTHERS ... (*Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.*) 91

S. LUKE XVIII. 11.

"God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican."

THOROUGHNESS ... (*Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.*) 99

S. MARK VII. 37.

"He hath done all things well."

DUTIES, HOW TO BE PERFORMED

(*Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 107

S. LUKE X. 27.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."

THANKSGIVING .. (*Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 117

S. LUKE XVII. 17.

"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

THE SERVICE OF GOD (*Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 126

S. MATTHEW VI. 24.

"No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

THE FEAR OF GOD ... (*Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 133

S. LUKE VII. 16.

"And there came a fear on all."

HUMILITY ... (*Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 141

S. LUKE XIV. 9.

"Give this man place."

THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD

(*Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 151

S. MATT. XXII. 37, 38.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

BREAKING THE ROOF (*Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.*) 159

GEN. VI. 16

"A window shalt thou make to the ark."

SERIOUSNESS ... (*Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.*) 167

S. MATTHEW XXII. 5.

"They made light of it."

MEDIATION ... (*Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.*) 175

EPHESIANS VI. 10.

"My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

THE REASON OF GOD'S PUNISHMENTS

(*Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.*) 184

S. MATT. XVIII 25.

"Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

DUTIES OWED TO GOD

(Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.) 172

S. MATTHEW XXII. 21.

"Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

GRACE *(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.)* 201

S. LUKE VIII. 45.

"Who touched Me?"

A LIFE OF GRACE *(Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.)* 209

S. JOHN VI. 12.

"They were filled."

MICHAELMAS 218

PSALM CIV. 4.

"Who maketh His angels spirits."

ALL SAINTS 226

ECCLES. IX. 8.

"Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment."

SCHOOL SERMON 234

S. LUKE II. 40.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."

HARVEST THANKSGIVING 242

PSALM CXXII. 4.

"Thither the tribes go up."

CLUB SERMON 251

I COR XII 20.

"Now are they many members, yet but one body."

THE HOLY TRINITY.

(Trinity Sunday.)

S. MATT. xxviii. 19.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

It came to pass that God resolved to try the faith of Abraham, and He bade him take his son Isaac, whom he loved, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon a mountain which He would indicate to him. Then “Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then, on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off.”

Try to figure to yourself that scene and that journey. Abraham had been assured solemnly by God that Isaac his son should be the father of a great nation, “I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him,” and now he was

bidden put this son to death. So he went on this journey with a full heart and a busy mind. He had perfect faith in God. He knew that God would keep His promise, but how he did not know. He was bidden sacrifice his son, and that son was very dear to him. You may be sure that he thought a great deal on the three days' journey to Mount Moriah, and that he felt he was approaching a moment of great solemnity when God would justify His ways before him, revealing Himself and His purposes more clearly than He had done hitherto.

Isaac was not aware that he was to be sacrificed, but Isaac knew that he was on his way to a mountain God had chosen, and that there he was to assist his father in a solemn act of worship of God. Isaac, as we see from several incidents in his history, was a thoughtful, meditative and pious man, and we may be quite sure that his mind was occupied in what he was about, and that in soul he was prepared to meet God. He saw how grave was his father's face, and he was grave also. He loved and feared God, and he was about to enter into the presence of God, and the thought awed him.

But it was otherwise with the two young men who drove the ass laden with wood for the sacrifice. Their chatter, and jokes, and laughter rather disturbed Abraham as he walked on. They were harmless, thoughtless young fellows; they knew what Abraham was going to Moriah about, but they did not think much about it. Of course he must offer sacrifice to his God. It was a thing that

had to be done. There—that was enough,—let them talk about other things, and so they joked with each other, and told tales, and gossiped about their friends, and played tricks with the ass, and went on in a light-hearted, careless way.

When they arrived within sight of Mount Moriah, Abraham suddenly stopped them. Their empty chatter had become unendurable. He turned to them, and said gravely, “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship.” Then Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together towards the mountain.

You know what followed,—how that Abraham prepared to slay his son, and Isaac was ready bound on the wood, prepared without a murmur to submit, when God stayed Abraham, and said, “By Myself have I sworn, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore,” and He added that glorious promise of the coming Messiah, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

This was not only an eventful day in the life of Abraham, but it was a day of great moment to the whole world, for on it God made this promise—the promise of the coming of Christ to be the Saviour of all men.

Well, whilst this solemn act of worship and self-sacrifice was going on on the top of the Mount, and God was declaring His purpose as He had not declared it before since He spoke to Adam and Eve,—what were the young men doing who were abiding with the ass? I have no doubt they were sitting quietly in the shade of a bush, talking about the food they got from their master and mistress, or about the work they had to do, and the unreasonableness of Abraham and the crabbed temper of Sarah, or about their sweethearts; or they were pulling straws and betting on them. They were abiding with the ass, not in bodily presence only, but in mind and spirit also. With the ass they shared their everyday thoughts and aims, and with the ass they were insensible to everything spiritual. Abraham was quite right when he bade them tarry with the ass, they were not fit to ascend into the hill of the Lord, and assist in His worship and hear His words. I do not in the least think they were bad young men, but that they were unspiritual young men, they neither cared for, nor felt, anything spiritual; God was to them a name, not a reality; divine worship was a form, not a privilege; religion was an external obligation, not spontaneous homage. They were incapable of seeing God and of hearing Him. The Mount of sacrifice was no place for them, their proper place was with the dumb ass, for they were only animals, a little higher than the poor brute who carried the sticks, but not sufficiently above it to have spiritual aspirations.

This day, my brethren, the Church takes her sons up into the holy mount, and reveals to them heaven open, and the worship there going on. "I heard as it were the voice of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things that must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne: and He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, on which the Church insists this day, is one which is beyond the power of the human mind to grasp. We can believe, but we cannot understand. We not only can believe, but we are bound to believe. This is one of those truths which Christ revealed to the world, a truth which man could not have discovered for himself, but which, by means of the faculty of faith, he is able to believe. We believe, then, on the testimony of Christ, that God is One, but that in this one Godhead there are Three Persons, of equal power, majesty and divinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and in this Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

There are other truths revealed to man, as the two Natures united in the One Christ, His Resurrection, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church, the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, all hard to understand, but not at all difficult to believe.

We have souls, and these souls have faculties, just as our bodies have faculties, and one chief faculty of the soul is to believe. We can hold and act upon those truths that have been revealed to us, as promptly and as confidently as though they were perceived by our senses, and grasped by our reason.

We are made up of mind, soul, and body. The body has faculties of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and the mind has faculties of reason, memory and will. In like manner the soul has faculties of believing, loving, and fearing. But of these I will only now speak of the faculty of believing, that is, of faith. Now you are aware that if you do not use your mind you will become quite stupid, and unable to think, and unless you exercise your memory you will be unable to remember accurately; one great purpose of sending children to school is to cultivate the faculties of reason and memory, so that they may be sensible and intelligent, and also be able to remember correctly. There have been cases of men shut up in prison for many years without occupation for their thoughts, who have become in time idiots, that is, incapable of reasoning.

Now it is with the soul as with the mind. It has, as I have told you, its faculties, and the chief of them is faith. Faith is the faculty of laying hold of those things which are invisible, but yet are real and necessary to us. By faith we believe in God, and we know His will, and put trust in His promises. "Without faith," we are told, "it is not possible to please God." And this is clear, for

unless we believe in God, we shall not try to obey His will. But then, just as the mind when not exercised loses the power of thinking, and the memory when unpracticed loses the power of recollecting, so the soul when it does not exercise itself in spiritual things loses the power of discerning things spiritual, it loses the faculty of faith. A man without faith is like a man without reason, we call the latter an idiot, and the former is just as incompetent in spiritual things as the latter is incompetent in intellectual matters. In religion everything is discernible by faith, and by faith only. The Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Presence of Christ in the Eucharist,—all these and many other things are not to be reasoned out, they are truths of religion and not of science, they are discerned by the faculties of the soul, and not of the mind. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. So our Lord said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The flesh profiteth nothing, He said on another occasion, to discern the mysteries of the kingdom of God—the spiritual eye of faith sees those things which are hidden to the carnal eye, and which lie outside the range of the eye of reason.

And now let me go back to Abraham and his serving men. He was on his way to Moriah to see God, to speak with Him, to worship Him, and to receive from Him a revelation of His will. When he had gone two days journey he stopped the young men. He saw that they

had no spiritual discernment ; it was impossible for him to take them on into God's presence, to associate them with him in his act of worship, and so he said to them, " Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship." As I said before, there is nothing to show that these young men were vicious, only—they were very animal. They had no spiritual yearnings in them, their souls were fast asleep, and so—the place for them was with the ass, and not with God.

And now, my brethren, how is it with you? Are you awake to spiritual influences? Have you spiritual desires? Or do you care only for things of this life, things of the body, things of the world? Do you abide with the asses? Are you mere animals in your thoughts and wishes and impulses? Or have you souls striving after God, desiring a closer walk with God, seeking God, hungering after the truth, ready to obey the will of God? Then God will call you to Him, and He will reveal Himself to you more and more fully as you approach Him more closely in the great sacrifice of the Altar.

The priest calls to the worshippers, " Lift up your hearts," and the congregation replies, " We lift them up unto the Lord." But is it the case that their hearts do rise? Why, they are bound to rise, to rise to God. If through life we make no answer to the call to lift up our hearts, then there remains nothing for us but to abide with the ass, and perish with the beasts. The spirit of man goeth upward, but the spirit of the beast goeth downward.

THE VISION OF GOD.

(First Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XVI. 24.

"I am tormented in this flame."

OUR Lord had been warning His hearers against a divided heart and against avarice. He had just said, "No servant can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other : or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And when He had said this, then, we are told, "the Pharisees, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him," that is, they sneered, and turned His words into ridicule, and put exaggerated instances to reduce His proposition to an absurdity. Then He, knowing their thoughts, and hearing their words, spoke the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus, contained in this day's gospel. He hoped to quell their sneers, and to make them grave and thoughtful over this dreadful story, this instance of the fall of the man who trusted in riches, and in his heart went from God.

There was a curious and striking tradition in the Church, which is contained in the writings attributed to Abdias, a disciple of the apostles, to this effect. Whilst Jesus was speaking this parable, a funeral passed, and the bier on which a dead man lay came up to the spot where He stood, as He spake the words "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Then the Pharisees, observing the effect of the parable on the people, mocked, and said, It is but a parable, an idle story, a mere invention of the brain. Whereupon, the dead man sat up on the bier, opened his eyes, raised his dead hands, and said in a hollow voice, "It is true! It is true! It is true!" and fell back rigid and dead as before.

This story circulated among the early Christians, and though I do not assert that it is true, I think it may have had some foundation of fact.

However,—whether it be a well-founded tradition or not, this is certain, without the testimony of the dead man, we know that the words of Christ are true.

This parable is remarkable, because in it Our Lord draws aside the veil which hides the unseen world, and reveals to us the state of the souls after they have departed from the body. It was spoken with the purpose of silencing the captious Pharisees, of awing them into reverence by the gravity of the vision exhibited to them. They were bidden look into hell and see its horrors, and beware themselves, lest they also, by their covetousness, their

want of charity, and their disregard of the prophecies of Moses and David, of Isaiah and the other prophets concerning the coming of Christ, should be cast into this place of torment.

S. Chrysostom, that great preacher, from whom we derive the last collect in our Morning and Evening service, in one of his sermons, said, "None of those who have hell before their eyes, will fall into hell." That is to say,—Let a man keep hell before him, let him look into its abyss, and see the darkness and misery of those therein, and he will shrink from it, and so rule his life according to God's will, that he will escape it. It is well for us then to have Hell before our eyes, to think of it, to look at it, so as to fear it. Christ opened its terrors to the Jews in the hope of making them thoughtful and fearful, and on this Sunday, the Church bids her sons look into it also. Last Sunday they gazed into Heaven, to-day, she turns their eyes to Hell. Let us then, to-day, at her bidding, knowing what a profitable consideration it is, look at the Rich man tormented in his flame, and let it awaken in us such a fear of offending God, that we may open our ears to the teaching of the Gospel, and so come not to this place of torment.

Now it is not my purpose to speak to you about the flames of Hell fire, or about the worm that dieth not, nor about the darkness of that awful place, but of one thing which hereafter the lost and the saved will have in common, but, which will be to the former a cause of suffering,

and which will be to the latter a cause of joy. This thing is—the Vision of God.

The Vision of God. As the body has eyes, so has the soul, as the body sees the sensible things of nature through the eyes, the soul sees the immaterial things of the spiritual world through its eyes. As the faculty of seeing with the eyes is called sight, so the faculty of seeing with the soul is called faith. Now God calls us to a life of Faith, that is to live as sensible of the reality of those things which we see with the eyes of the soul. The eyes of the body may become clouded and dark, so that they no longer discern objects, and so the eyes of the soul may become clouded and dark, so that they no longer see God and spiritual things. But the more we exercise the seeing power of the soul, the more real to us become the things of the spiritual world, and the more does God become the All and All in our spiritual perspective. The blessedness of our state hereafter will be, that we shall see God face to face, we shall see and know perfectly. “For now we see through a glass, darkly,” says S. Paul, “but then, face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.” (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) S. Paul makes this remark after having spoken of the growth of man in the spiritual life, and he likens it to a straining after a perfect sight of God. Now, we only see indistinctly and by glimpses,—for God is distant, but we press on drawing nearer and nearer, and as we draw nearer we see clearer and more fully, till at last we pass into the presence

of God, and then we see Him in His glory, fully,—and are satisfied.

If, my dear Brethren, Heaven is to be any happiness to us hereafter, we must, through life, be straining to reach God, be looking up to Him, and drawing nearer and nearer to Him ; then—because the seeing of God in His perfections has been the desire of our hearts all our life, we shall be satisfied when we are with Him in Heaven. All eternity will be spent in contemplating God, and eternity will be too short to show us all His perfections and to quench the desire of our souls to see and know more. But, if we have had no such desire, if we have looked to earth instead of to Heaven, if we have not striven to reach God in our earthly walk, then our state hereafter will be sad. When our eyes close to this world, “In that day,” says the prophet, “the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.” (Isai. xxix. 18.) They will see God,—but they will see God no longer as an object of attraction, but with terror and repulsion. They will see God,—not as a loving Father, but as a wrathful judge,—not as a light illumining, but as a devouring fire. When God came down on Mount Sinai to speak with Moses, the people saw only black cloud about the mount, and lightning flashing forth from the cloud, and heard thunderings and voices, and the sounding of trumpets, and they were filled with fear. But Moses entered into the cloud and saw God, and his face shone like the sun from having been in the presence of God.

David says in the ninth Psalm, when speaking of the end of all things, that then "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," but there is another translation of these words which gives a somewhat different meaning, and judging by the context, a truer one. This is, "the wicked shall be turned about in Hell." That is—when the wicked are cast into Hell, a great change will be wrought in them, their eyes will be opened, and from turning away from God, they will be turned to look at Him, and then they who have hitherto forgotten God will see Him, and see what He is, and what they have lost by turning away from Him all their lives.

The wicked go down into the pit—the black, the bottomless pit, and when there they turn round and lift up their eyes, being in torment, and see God, and are filled with dismay, and terror, and shame, and purposeless regret.

All through life they have forgotten God, they have seen nothing of Him, they have come to utterly disregard Him, now *they are turned about in Hell* and see Him. All through life they have had their minds filled only with their own selfish aims and carnal pursuits, they have not raised eye or thought beyond the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, have occupied them, now *they are turned about in Hell*, and they see the vanity of evreything that has hitherto engrossed their thoughts. The world and all things therein have perished, all the pleasures of sense have failed, and are things of the past, there is no more revelling and drinking,

and disorderly living, there is no more hoarding up of riches, there is no more scope for ambition, where they now are, *they are turned about in Hell*, and find that the eternity before them is a horrible blank. They see now their wasted opportunities, the privileges they have slighted, the grace they have squandered, the bad example they have set, the ruin they have wrought on themselves and others. *They are turned about in Hell*, and they see everything really, as it is, in its proper worth, when it is too late to redeem the time. Then the eyes that were blind to the light, see out of the obscurity and the darkness in which they have enveloped themselves, when it is too late for them to walk as children of light. Then the ears that were deaf to the voice of God speaking through conscience, and through the Church, hear the words of the sentence of God and recognize its justice.

We speak of conversion, and call on all those who have not had the true end of existence before them, who have not lifted up their eyes, whilst pilgrims and sojourners here, to God as the goal of their journey. We call, I say, on all such to be *turned about*, whilst there is time, and in the words of the hymn,

“Redeem thy misspent moments past,
And live each day as if thy last.”

We call on all those who are giddy and careless, who postpone the earnest consideration of the things of eternity, we call on them now to be *turned about*, and to look to God and realise the gravity of their situation whilst there is time.

In this day's Gospel you have the "turning about" of Dives. Hitherto he had disregarded Lazarus; hitherto he had not raised his eyes to heaven; hitherto he had not regarded Abraham the Father of the faithful; hitherto he had thought nothing about his five brethren; now—all at once,—he wakes in Hell and is *turned about* in it, and he sees what a wrecked life his has been, how he has neglected Lazarus; now he looks up to the God whom he has forgotten, and to Abraham, in whose steps he had not walked, and he thinks of his brethren following his evil example, and likely soon to rejoin him in his place of torment.

"The wicked," says David, "shall be turned about in Hell, and all the people that forget God" shall suddenly wake up to see Him. What a turning about is that! What a terrible shock! O my brethren! think, think what it will be to you hereafter, unless you are converted now in life, and turn to the Lord; unless you set your face now in the direction of Jerusalem, and seek the Lord, and strive to attain to Him. "Turn Thou us, O good Lord," we pray in a collect in the Commination Service, "and so shall we be turned." Ah! well may we pray for that, so that walking forward steadily towards Heaven, we may go on from light to light, to the clearer and more perfect knowledge of God—a daily progression towards truth and holiness—and so escape that fearful and despairing turning about in Hell of all those who have forgotten God and had their backs to Him here, when it is too late to take a step towards Him.

THE CALL TO THE SUPPER.

(Second Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XIV. 17.

"Come; for all things are now ready."

OUR Lord spoke the Parable in to-day's Gospel in response to the remark made by one of those who heard His instructions, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." That remark was striking, coming when it did. Christ had been speaking of very plain and homely matters, not about high and spiritual things. He had been teaching the duty of taking a broad and generous view of the obligations laid on man by God. God had forbidden work on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees said therefore that it was wrong to do a good and kind deed on that day. Our Lord healed a dropsical man before their eyes, and shewed them that the command of God could not be better observed, and the day be better sanctified, than by shewing kindness on it. Then He went on to instruct His hearers in humility, when He saw those who were bidden choosing out the chief rooms and best places at the tables for themselves.

After that He went on to teach them general charity. Thereat one who heard Him suddenly cried out, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." A sudden illumination of the spirit, a flash of divine light revealed the truth to this one man. He saw, all at once, something hidden from the rest—that Christ was the founder of a Kingdom, and that He was about to call men into this Kingdom, and there to feed them with the Bread of Life. He had a prophetic inspiration. He saw what no one else saw—into the purposes of God. Christ at once responded to this man's exclamation, and He proceeded to reveal the truth further, to shew what would be, and to shew, not only His readiness to receive men to eat bread in the Kingdom of God, but man's reluctance to accept the invitation. He shewed this by the Parable of a man who has made a great supper, and has invited many. Those he has bidden decline his invitation. One has his farm, another his merchandise, the third his family, and so they all, with one consent, begin to make excuse. They make mere excuses. The first says he has bought a farm, and he wants to see it. Why?—who dreams of buying an estate without having first gone over it and valued it? That excuse was nonsense. The second must go ploughing—at supper time, just before bedtime, when the sun has set, and night has come on—that is nonsense. The third has married a wife, and can't come. Why—the man who made the supper would be delighted if she were brought. She would be given the place of honour, as bride.

That excuse is nonsense. These are mere excuses. Then he sends out into the streets and lanes of the city, and brings in the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind ; and as there is still room, he sends into the highways and hedges. Thus, then, Christ shews us in this Parable His eagerness that all men should come to the feast of good things that He has prepared, and He shows also how very reluctant men are to accept His invitation. Blessed indeed are they who eat bread—the Bread of Life—in His Church, the Kingdom of God,—but then, the vast majority of men do not care to be blessed, they have no appetite for the food He offers.

Happy, happy time ! cried the man among those who hear, when the Kingdom of Heaven will be open to all believers, when the Lord's table will be spread, and on it will be placed the Bread which came down from Heaven, the Bread of which they who eat shall live for ever.

Yes ! Christ replies, Blessed indeed shall they be, and I shall ever be ready to receive all who will come to My Table, but—alas ! alas ! how few they will be. The table will be spread, the cup will overflow with love, but—all with one consent will make excuse. The soldiers with the spear shall pierce My heart, but the indifference and ingratitude of men will pierce Me through with pains more keen than that, the bitter pain of continually recurring disappointments.

Christ was on earth for thirty-three years, He laboured

as no other, He spake as never man spake, He healed the sick, restored the maimed, revived the dead : He hungered, suffered, died—and with what results? He had twelve apostles, of these one was a traitor, one denied Him, all deserted Him ; and He had seventy disciples, —just seventy. Verily it would seem as if His life and labour had been cast away. Thirty-three years, and seventy professed disciples !

Before He left this earth, He breathed on His apostles, and gave them commission and authority to go in His name throughout the world, and invite all men out of every nation and language to the banquet of good things He had prepared. And they went everywhere, the Lord working with them. With what result? The result was great apparently, but only apparently. The Church grew and spread, but, alas ! though many flowed into it, few were really in earnest. The net was cast into the sea, and drew good and bad fish, some good, most bad ; the field was sown and the seed sprang up, wheat and tares, some wheat, much tares. Many are called, and few are chosen. Many indeed listened to and professed their acceptance of the call, but when it came to partaking of the table, of drawing near to the banquet, “they, all with one consent began to make excuse,” How is it now? There are multitudes who profess and call themselves Christians, but how many of them are walking worthy of their profession, are true to their calling? How many draw near to the table of the Lord and eat Bread in the kingdom of God? How many

of you are communicants? You all with one consent begin to make excuse. And yet—that bread is the nourishment of the soul, without it, the spiritual life becomes faint, and must expire. Except you eat of that bread, and drink of that cup, you are not living the life of faith,—the spiritual life. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.” Such were the words of Christ, and they were not idle or empty words.

A very touching story is told in the second book of Kings concerning a woman of Shunem. She and her husband were wealthy people, owning some land and farming it; but they had no family, and this was a bitter disappointment to them. Now the prophet Elisha was accustomed to pass their farm, and when he went by he was sure of a kindly welcome and a night's lodging.

Those were bad times, when the kings of Israel were evil, and the people were falling away from the Lord, so that Elisha had to go about a great deal exhorting to the worship of God, and reviving in the hearts of the people the knowledge of God and true faith. The Shunammite said to her husband, “Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.” Her husband consented, and so the room was built and furnished, and Elisha made

it his lodging whenever he went that way. He was touched with the kindness of these good people, and so he called the woman to him and said, ' Behold, thou hast been careful for us—(that is, for him and his servant Gehazi :) with all this care ; what is to be done for thee ? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host ?"—that is, would you like me to ask a favour for you from the king ; to give you a better farm elsewhere, or to give some title and badge of honour to your husband ; or would he enter the army, and be promoted to position therein ? Then the woman answered humbly, and with downcast eyes, " I dwell among mine own people." She meant this, No ! I am content where I am, I desire no honours, no riches, no change of condition. Those among whom I live are tied to me, and I to them by bonds of kinship and of love. " I dwell among mine own people." Then Gehazi whispered to his master, " She has no child. That is her great trouble." So Elisha promised to obtain a child for her of God, and he prayed, and his prayer was answered.

Why have I told you this story ? What connexion has it with that of which I have been speaking to you ? That you will soon see.

As Christ desired the salvation of men, longed for souls to come to Him, so likewise does the Church. In the Gospel for next Sunday, you will be shown both Christ and the Church engaged in the one great and engrossing work of bringing the lost to God. Christ represented as

the Good Shepherd, seeking the sheep that is lost, the Church represented as the woman sweeping her house, and searching with the light of God's Word for the coin that is lost. The sheep and the coin are one and the same,—the human soul

And what is the work of the Church? It is the bringing of children to God, at her fonts she baptizes those born in sin and the children of wrath, and introduces them to God as His children, henceforth by adoption and grace. For what are her altars spread, but to nourish the sons of God, who are gathered like the olive branches, round about His table. For what is her preaching? It is to call those sons who have been rebellious, to return to the God and Father they have forsaken, and to instruct those who are faithful, and excite in them love and reverence to their Father which is in Heaven. For what are her prayers? They are the out-pouring of her maternal heart, her outcry to God to give her more sons, born of the water of baptism, and strengthened and restored by the sacred blood, that she may bring them up in the fear and love of their Father. She prays, "Lord, I dwell in the midst of mine own people. I am of the world so far as that all my members are carnal; around me on all sides are men, are human families, communities of idolaters, communities of Mohammedans, communities of Jews, communities of Calvinists, Lutherans, Wesleyans, Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists,—but I, I the Church, am Thine own, chosen, inspired, protected, preserved by Thee. I dwell

in the midst of mine own people, but Lord ! I am of a sorrowful spirit ; and I pour out my soul before Thee. Those others are as Peninnah, they have children at their desire, but I, like Hannah, have none. And now, O Lord of Hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid children, then I will give them unto the Lord all the days of their life." (1 Sam. i. 11.)

The heart of the Church within her is sad, the tears are on her cheeks, and her lips move in incessant prayer, and all the desire of her soul is to bring up children to the Lord, and to gather them about His table.

"With desire," Christ said, "have I desired to eat this passover with you before I die," and, O ! what and how great is His desire to see His sons and daughters at His board, now that He is risen and distributes to His elect the Bread of Life. With desire He desired to feed His own, when He was on earth, with desire He desires to feed them now that He is in heaven. With desire His Church desires to gather in children to Him, and to bring them up in His love and fear, to teach them to lift up their eyes to Him, to call Him Father, to kneel before Him and offer to Him their petitions, and above all to gather together before Him, like the young olive branches round about His table.

SCANDAL-TAKING.

(Third Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XV. 2.

“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.”

THE Pharisees were scandalised at the conduct of Christ. There are two ways in which scandal may be given, and one in which scandal may be taken. Scandal is given by anyone who does a wrong act. Scandal is also given by doing that which is not in itself wrong, but which is liable to be misinterpreted and thereby to shock and offend ignorant or weak consciences. Thus S. Paul saw that some were offended because others ate meat that had been offered in sacrifice to idols. He said, sensibly enough, the idol is nothing, nevertheless, because such conduct gives scandal, avoid doing it. “Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.” (1. Cor. viii. 11-13.) The third kind of scandal

is not scandal given, but scandal taken ; and it is what is called Pharisaic scandal, that is, the sort of scandal which the Pharisees were addicted to. The sin is, in this case, in the person scandalised, not in the person who gives scandal. On another occasion our Lord gave scandal to the Pharisees. He was teaching that what defiles a man is not the meat and drink that go in at his mouth, but the foul and profane and spiteful words and lies which come out of his mouth. "Then came His disciples and said unto Him, Knowest Thou that the Pharisees were offended"—that is scandalised—"after they heard this saying?" Christ made short work of this sort of scandal. He answered, "Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone : they be blind leaders of the blind" (S. Matt. xv. 12-14) ; and, instead of ceasing from this sort of teaching, He went on at once to enforce it still more plainly and emphatically. "Do not ye yet understand—those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart ; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man : but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

You will remember how very often Christ scandalised these wretched Pharisees. He healed men on the Sabbath, and that was a sore scandal to them. When He healed the dropsical man on the Sabbath, the Pharisees

turned up their eyes, and held up their hands, and were shocked beyond measure. When He opened the eyes of the blind man on the same day, they shook their heads, and groaned and said, "This Man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath Day." "Give God the praise : we know that this Man is a sinner."

Again, He was at Capernaum, when one sick of the palsy was let down through the roof and laid before Him. He was surrounded by Scribes and Pharisees, and He said, "Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee." The Scribes and Pharisees were scandalised beyond measure. Here was a bold assumption of divine power. They said within themselves, "This Man blasphemeth." Then Jesus, instead of turning off what He had said, and softening it, went to the point immediately, in spite of the shock He had given them. "Jesus knowing their thoughts, said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts ? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; or to say, Arise and walk ? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." (S. Matt. ix. 2-6.) It was the same again when He sat at meat in the house of Simon the Leper. A woman, who was a sinner, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when Simon

saw this, he was scandalised, and said, "This Man, if He were a Prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him; for she is a sinner." This drew forth from Christ the beautiful parable of the creditor and the two debtors; and when He had spoken thus, He said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven." Thereupon those who sat at meat were scandalised once more, they began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But our Lord took no notice of their murmuring and their offended glances, but said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." (S. Luke vii. 37-50.) I might give you other instances of the way in which the Pharisees and Scribes took scandal at our Lord's conduct and words, but these will suffice.

There was one long before,—a type of Jesus—who also gave offence. That was Moses. He took to him to wife an Ethiopian woman, that is a negro woman. At once his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam took offence, and began to speak against him, and to sneer, and dispute his position as leader. How could God have chosen Moses as the guide of His people, when this guide brings a hideous black woman into the family! Then God was wrath, and struck Miriam with leprosy. "My servant Moses is faithful in all mine house," He declared. (Numb. xii.) For, indeed, as I said before, Moses was a type of Christ, and in thus taking to him the poor despised negro woman and raising her to be his wife, he fore-

shadowed Christ taking the poor despised Gentiles and bringing them into the congregation, and making of the Gentile converts a Church which He would love and cherish, and dignify and glorify. Or I may say that this black woman was a figure of those souls darkened with sin and degraded by the bondage of Satan, who are received by Christ. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save those that were lost."

Indeed, indeed! That which was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the Jewish Scribes and Elders, is the cause of our rejoicing. That for which they scoffed at Jesus and despised Him, is the occasion of our praise and thanksgiving. "This Man receiveth sinners." Levi is at the tax-gatherer's table. He rises up. He, the despised Publican has been called, and he is made an Apostle. "This Man receiveth sinners." Peter the timorous denies his Master with oaths and curses. Yet the Lord meets him after His resurrection and asks him for some assurance of his love, and then commends to him the care of His flock. "This Man receiveth sinners." Mary Magdalene had been a sinner, but she had repented, and wept over her transgressions. From Jesus she receives the sentence of her absolution and the blessing of peace.

"This Man receiveth sinners." Saul the persecutor is fighting against the Church of Christ when he is arrested on his course, and converted into an apostle

of the faith he had fought against, and a soldier of the cross he had despised. "This Man receiveth sinners." The time would fail to tell of those blessed ones who have turned from darkness to light, who have crucified the old man and utterly abolished the whole body of sin, who have fought the good fight of faith, resisting unto blood, who before were aliens and unbelievers who have bowed their necks to the yoke of Christ, who before followed their fleshly wills. Near on two thousand years have passed since Christ appeared, and it was said of Him, "This Man receiveth sinners," and not a year passes without the same saying being verified, East and West, and North and South, the sinners come to Him, and "he that cometh to Him, He will in no ways cast out." How long the world may last, God only knows, but this I know for certain, that long as the world may endure, "This Man will receive sinners," aye ! and eat with them. He will invite them to His table, and extend to them His flesh, which is meat indeed, and His blood, which is drink indeed. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;" and well I know that above, in the new Jerusalem, on the holy heavenly Zion, in the company of the elect and of the angels, in that blessed land where there is no need of candle, nor of sun, or moon, for the Lord is its everlasting light, there we shall see thousands and ten thousands "who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the

Lamb," and whose only claim of admission is that—
"This Man receiveth sinners."

It is written of David, when he was at Adullam, that "His brethren and all his father's house went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was bitter of soul (*Murg.*), gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." (1 Sam. xxii. 1, 2.) Words these prophetic of Christ. In this was David a true type of his Son. He is the great Captain of our salvation, the Head of the Church over us all. To Him are gathered His brethren, patriarchs and just men of old, and all the angels, Cherubim and Seraphim that worship, filling His Father's house,—to Him the King of saints and angels. To Him also fly those that are in distress, for where else can their tears be staunched, and their aching hearts find rest, than with Him and in the Adullam of His Church. To Him also are gathered all those that are in debt, in trespasses and transgressions, for "this Man receiveth sinners," He pardoneth transgression and putteth away sin. And to Him also fly those whose hearts are bitter and their lives full of pain, for He alone can sweeten and relieve. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, let me revert to what I was speaking about at the beginning of my sermon. I spoke of scandal taken, and I showed you how that

Christ, throughout His life, was giving scandal to certain men. I have shown you how that that which scandalised them is indeed His glory, that which offended them ought to have attracted them, that which shocked them ought to have convinced them. There is such a thing, as I told you, as scandal taken, which is as sinful as scandal given. Scandal taken, as you may see from the instance of the Scribes and Pharisees, hardens and deadens the heart, making it incapable of receiving inspirations of good, incapable of elevation. This is a disposition we must strive earnestly to avoid. It was one that was, as we see, very general in our Lord's time, and it is quite as prevalent now. And just as in His time it deadened men against receiving the truth and the life, so it deadens men against all Divine calls and inspirations now. This scandal-taking temper is the temper of mind which is ever on the alert to take offence, to see wrong when no wrong is intended. It is a narrow prejudiced state of mind growing out of self-assurance, self-conceit, and the only sure way of being free from it, is to be humble and teachable. "Be not wise in your own conceits." "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

FAITH.

(Fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

HEB. XI. 6.

"Without Faith it is impossible to please God."

IN the Parable of the Prodigal Son, we are told that when the young man returned to his father, then his father gave him three things. "He said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." These three gifts have been taken to represent those three graces which are given by God to every Christian:—Faith, Hope, and Charity. These are three graces which are not natural, but supernatural, not to be acquired by man, but which come down from God. No man by thinking and studying can bring himself to faith. He may dispose his soul to receive it, just as the prodigal son, by his repentance and return, placed himself in a position to receive what his father gave him. So also, Hope, and Charity (that is, Divine Love), are not acquired by man, but are free gifts of God, they come down from the Father of lights.

As I said, the three gifts received by the prodigal son

from his father have been interpreted as these three gifts given by God to mankind when it returns to Him. As the best robe covered the prodigal, and hid his rags and sordidness, so does Charity cover a multitude of sins. As shoes enable him who went slowly and with difficulty, to quicken his pace and speed along his road to his destination, so does Hope give activity to us in running the course that is set before us. It stimulates us to energy, and it keeps us active. And the ring is thought to represent Faith, the One holy, incorrupt, and entire Faith. For as a ring is one, so is Faith one. As the ring is of gold that never rusts, so is Faith incorruptible. The bride in marriage receives the ring as pledge of her faith that she will remain true and incorrupt, and for ever united to her husband ; and so Faith is that which unites us to God, consecrates us to Him, pledges us to be His for ever.

“Without faith,” says the Apostle, “it is impossible to please God,” and he goes on to say, “for he that cometh to God must believe that He is.” Faith, indeed, is the foundation stone of the whole Christian fabric. It is the root of the entire Christian life. And, indeed, this stands to reason. How can a man hope in God unless he believes in God ? How can he love God unless he believes in God ? A man may lead a moral life, he may lead a good and charitable life, but it is not a Christian and spiritual life, unless he have faith. He that has faith acts from that principle. He that has no faith

acts from another principle. There are guns of two sorts, one is discharged by gunpowder, and another—a toy gun—has a bit of steel spring within it which is drawn back and discharged by a touch of the trigger. The two instruments look something alike, but they go off on entirely different systems. So the man whose good life is prompted by his faith, and the man whose good life is prompted by something altogether different from faith, are something alike in the effects they produce, and their outward appearance, but they *act upon different principles*. The one is charged with Faith, and the other with something else, I do not know what. They belong to two different orders of existence. The one is a spiritual man, and the other is a natural man. There may be, and indeed there are, good natural men, good heathens, good idolaters, good Musselmen, good atheists ; but you must clearly understand that all the good they do is not done from the one motive which is alone acceptable with God. Not only so, but they belong to an entirely different order of beings from baptised Christians. Just as in nature there are the order of fishes and the order of birds, so in the human race there are two distinct orders, the spiritual and the natural. When we are baptised, then God takes us out of the natural order, and infuses into us the three divine graces, Faith, Hope, and Love, to use or to neglect, to cultivate and perfect, or to allow to languish and deteriorate till they disappear. Baptism is the solemn and formal act by which God lifts man out of the material

and natural life into the spiritual and divine life. No man can step from one to the other unassisted, no man can light the fire of faith in his heart by himself. It is the gift of God alone.

This way of God's dealing is exactly the same in kind as His dealing in other works of nature.

If you will look about you, you will find that creation is divided into two great parts, that part which has not life, and that part which has. Of life there are infinite varieties : the little lichen that stains the wall has life, and grows and flowers and seeds, but the stone to which it clings has not life. The grass that springs up out of the earth has life, it is born and it dies, but the earth out of which its roots draw their nourishment has not life. The fish that dart through the waters have life, but the water, although it ripples and sparkles as it runs, has no life.

This, you think, is very simple. But it is not so simple as you think. For a long time it was supposed that gradually, and little by little, life grew out of what was lifeless. For under examination it was found that there were forms of life with so little life in them that it was hard to say that they did live. I dare say you have found sticking to water cress something like jelly, very transparent. That is a living animal, but it has got neither head, nor heart, nor limbs, and if cut into a hundred pieces it feels no pain, and each bit goes on living its stupid life. That is a sort of life not worth calling life, which is without personality,—and yet it is life, a first step in life which leads up a long ladder to

man. Now it is a truth perfectly established among scientific men, that a great gulf is fixed between life and death, between the living creature, animal or plant, and the inanimate stone. There is no such barrier between the plant and the animal, but between living nature and dead nature there is this barrier, which is impassable from the dead to the living. No change of substance, no chemistry, no electricity, nor any form of energy can endow a single atom of the mineral world with the attribute of life. Only when some little living fibre touches them from above, are the dead particles lifted, and taken up, and inspired with life. Take a flowering plant ; where do you suppose it has got its green stalk, its soft and beautiful leaves, its delicate painted flower that exhales so sweet a scent ? Out of the earth. The life that was sealed up in the seed broke forth and touched the earth all round and took little particles of it, and with its living power converted and transfigured it into the material of which stalk, and leaf, and blossom are made up. It was not the earth which lifted itself, and glorified itself. No, no ! It would have lain dull and dead through all eternity, had not the living seed fallen into it, and only so much of the earth as has been touched by, and has been influenced by the living force in the plant, is ennobled and transformed. After awhile death comes. The leaves fall off, and you rake the weeds and the beech leaves together into a heap, and in a few years all has dissolved back again into mold. Earth it was, and unto earth returns.

I wish you clearly to understand this great fact,—that there is no passing from death unto life in the world of nature without communication from above. What is dead remains dead till life reaches it from some living organism and takes it up out of its deadness, and assumes it to itself, and works at it and breathes into it the spirit of life.

Now just in the same way there stands a gulf fixed between the natural and the spiritual, so that they who would pass from thence cannot, except they be brought over by Divine Grace,—the touch of Spirit alone can take and transform the natural into the spiritual. That touch is given in Baptism, and then the infused life is given, which, allowed to operate, will transform the entire man from a natural man into a spiritual man. Moreover, just as in the world of living creatures we see life in various forms, only just apparent as in that bit of jelly I spoke of clinging to the cress leaves, and fully active in the swallow that wheels and darts about in the air ; stupid and blind, as in the earthworm ; and full of consciousness and personality in man :—so is it in the spiritual world, there are some who have scarce any Divine life in them, it has not come to consciousness, and others who live to the spirit, who are full of faith, who walk by faith, not by sight. Life is a gift of God. But when once it is given, the use made of it is left to the creature. So Faith is a gift of God, but after it is once given, the use made of it is left to His creature. You all of you have Faith, the spiritual life has been breathed into you. In that you are unlike other men. But

then—what use do you make of your Faith, of this precious, divinely-given spark of a new life? Do you let it just exist?

Now I want you to understand this. I put it as plainly as I can. In the world of nature the passage from inanimate to animate nature is sealed on the natural side. In like manner the door from the natural to the spiritual is that no man by himself, unassisted, can pass through it. The world of natural men is staked off from the spiritual world by barriers which have never yet been crossed from within. No mental effort, no excitement of emotion, no progress of civilization, no cultivation by education can endow any single human soul with the attribute of spiritual Life. "Except a man be born again . . . except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." There Our Lord plainly lays down the only way in which the crossing over from one world to the other is to be effected. Man *cannot* enter into the spiritual kingdom except by the sacrament of Baptism. But then, —from that moment he is left—not unassisted,—but left to work out by his own effort, his own salvation. He is given the talent of Faith; let him put it out to usury, and he will be rewarded, let him bury it in a napkin, and he will be cast back into the natural man, and his gift taken from him as unworthy to keep it. The gift given must be used, or it will be taken away.

You have Faith, how do you use it?

You will find a great deal about Faith in the Epistles. A mighty stress is laid on it, and reasonably, for without

Faith we are dead before God, by our faith we show that we live to the spirit, we show that we have been removed out of the kingdom of the unspiritual into the Realm of Grace. As the throbbing of the heart shows that there is life in us, so the activity of Faith shows that there is spiritual life in us. S. Paul says that, "to be carnally minded is death." That is, to be minded like the unspiritual is like stepping down and back out of the realm of life, into which we have been introduced, down and back into that from which we have been raised. S. Paul also says, "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God . . . The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." (1 Cor. ii. 12-15.)

What I have been saying to you is an explanation of the truth which S. Paul insists on here. The life of the spirit, is, as he says, "freely" given us, and when given it begins to "receive" and to "know" the things of God, that is to say, it exercises its life by faith. As the living baby begins to "receive" its food, and to look about and see and know its mother and its home, so the living spirit of life within looks at God, and begins to see and know the truths of a Christian home—the Church, into which it is born. But these are powers that the natural man hath not. They are foolishness to him. He cannot receive

and know because he is not translated into that kingdom in which the powers of seeing and knowing are exercised. But, after Faith has come, then it is man's duty to make use of the newly acquired gift, to show forth his faith by living a life of faith. Faith must be active, it must not be allowed to go to sleep and die in the soul ; and it will go to sleep and die, unless it be exerted. "Ye are saved through faith," says S. Paul, "and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God " (Eph. ii. 8) ; but then it is a grace that increases from one degree to another, as everything that lives must grow. "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." (Rom. i. 17.) "It worketh by love." (Gal. v. 6.) In some it is strong, in others weak. And if it be allowed to languish, then it dies altogether. "I live," says S. Paul,—but how?—"by the faith of the Son of God." (Gal. ii. 20.)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH.

(Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

ST. LUKE XVII. 5.

“The apostles said unto the Lord, increase our Faith.”

I SPOKE to you last Sunday about Faith as a gift of God. Now, this Sunday, I am going to speak to you again about Faith, but this time about the qualities of Faith.

Faith has got three qualities, and unless it has these qualities it is unprofitable. These qualities are, Firmness, Fulness, Fruitfulness. In a word, three F's. That Faith which is firm, full, and fruitful is a saving, living Faith; but the faith which is weak and wavering, incomplete, and fruitless, is an unprofitable and dead faith.

As Faith is the heart of the system, the foundation of the spiritual life, it is very necessary for you to be able to “prove your own selves, whether ye be in the Faith,” as the apostle urges; and if you find on proving that your faith is faulty in one of its qualities, then you must act like the Apostles in my text, and ask God to “Increase your faith.” Your only justification with God is through faith. “We are justified by faith,” we are told,—well then,

by all means let us know what sort of faith that is which justifies us, lest deceiving our own selves we perish.

A saving, living, justifying faith, has—as I have said, the three F's, it is firm, full, and fruitful.

I must now explain these qualities to you, that you may be able to examine your own hearts, prove your own faith, and see whether it has the ring of sound metal, or whether it give a dead note like a base alloy,—a bad, a counterfeit faith. When you go to a shop and buy something, the shopman, having taken your money, lets it fall on the counter, and if it rings, then it is good coin, and he accepts it, but if it has a leaden dead sound, he gives it back to you, and says, “This won't do. It is bad coin, and won't pass. You must give me another.” And if you have not another, then he says, “Return me the goods.”

In London, when a driver of a cab receives a coin, he cannot well clink it on the pavement, so he puts it between his teeth, and, if it bends, he returns it, saying, “That is no good, it is a bad piece of money.” For a good coin is hard and firm, but a bad one is soft and bends.

We shall all of us have our faith tried, before God gives us any good things more, either in this present life, or in the life to come, and if our faith be weak and incomplete, and unfruitful, then He will refuse it.

But, you may say to me, How is this? Faith is God's gift. Does He give us a bad faith? No, He does not, but you may spoil a good faith, and just as mutilated coin

is refused at the Bank which issued it sound, so a spoiled faith is refused by God who gave it you good.

Suppose you are given a good sovereign or a shilling ; you crack it, and if cracked, it will no longer ring, and if it will not ring, it is refused. Or you may bring it into contact with quicksilver, when it will suck in the quicksilver and change colour and quality, and become dead and valueless. Or you may lose the coin given you, and try to pass off a sham one in its stead.

So with faith. It may be cracked. I said that faith to be good must be full and entire. It may be flawed and faulty, and then it is rejected. Or it may be so corrupted by contact with evil teaching, as to have lost all the ring of faith. Or it may be lost altogether, and a mere make-believe, spurious faith offered in its place.

But now, that you may understand thoroughly what a real saving faith is, let me examine closely its qualities with you.

1. The first of these qualities is Firmness. S. James in his general Epistle says, " Let a man ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." And S. Peter says that we must resist the devil, our great adversary, "steadfast in the faith." S. Paul also says, " Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ;" and he rejoices in his hope of eternal reward, because he

has remained steadfast in his faith to the end. "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

I have told you that faith is the foundation on which the whole religious life is reared, and unless it be strong and firm, the edifice reared upon it will be liable to fall. The Holy Spirit was promised by Christ to be the Comforter of His Church. Now comforter does not mean consoler, but strengthener; and the Holy Spirit's mission is to brace up and make firm the faith of the children of God. Consequently, we bring young children as they come to years of discretion to be confirmed, that is, made strong, to have their faith braced and made more solid and stout, by the outpouring on them of the Divine Spirit, the 'strengthener.' You can easily see, that unless Faith is strong, Hope will be weak and tottering, and Love will be nothing to speak of, for how can we hope in God, and how can we love God, unless we believe in Him, in what He has promised us, and what He has done for us? The stability of Hope, the fervour of Love, depend on the firmness of the Faith which underlies them.

There is a very common word now used to designate those religious truths that each man holds, which is most objectionable,—a man's faith is called his "opinions," that is—something he thinks, and which may or not be true, and which he may change. Now, I doubt not, 'opinion' is what a great many people have, but 'opinion'

is a poor foundation on which to build :—what we want is Faith, which is a rock, not shifting opinions, like sea sand.

II. The second quality of Faith is fulness. Faith must be entire, and not cracked like a sovereign which will not ring. For, as S. Paul says, there is but "One Faith," as there is but "One Lord," and "One Baptism," that is, Faith is one entire and perfect whole. The Faith is that body of Truth necessary to salvation, which Christ has revealed to the Church, and of which He has made the Church the guardian unto the end of time. S. Paul accordingly speaks of the Church as the "pillar and ground of the Truth," as that pillar or rock on which Christ has put the truth like a lighthouse, to send its beams over the tossing waves of this world, as a guiding beacon to all who pass, to show them where they are, and which is their way to the one port of safety.

Now, because God has revealed His Truth, it stands to reason, that we have no right to pick and choose among its articles which we will believe, and which we will reject, to say these are true because I think they are true, and these are false because I don't understand anything about them, or I don't like them. No!—These are true and those are true, because they are all the revelation of God. They do not owe their truth to man's opinion. They are true because they form a part of the One Faith given by God to His Church.

There is a sin called in Scripture, Heresy, and we pray in the Litany to be delivered from it. Heresy really means

"picking and choosing" among the truths of the faith, and obstinately resisting those truths which we do not like to accept. S. Paul says that this "picking and choosing" is one of the works of the flesh. And elsewhere he says, "There must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you," (1 Cor. xi. 19). That is to say, do not be surprised and distressed, there will always be, as long as the world lasts, some who pick and choose, and refuse to accept the whole Truth, the entire circle of the Truth. And God allows this, because Satan blinds the eyes of men to the Truth, and it is necessary that the faith of the elect should be tried and proved to be sound. So the whole and entire truth is that Faith which is taught everywhere, and has been in all time held in the Church, and which is contained in the Creed. "The form of sound words which thou hast heard of me," S. Paul calls it, and he exhorts Timothy to "hold it fast." Also he urges Titus very earnestly and emphatically to see that those Cretans over whom he is placed as Bishop, shall be "saved in the Faith."—sound, not cracked, holding the entire round of the Faith without a flaw in it.

Heresy, I said, was a sin, and as S. Paul says, it is a sin incurring eternal damnation. I want you clearly to understand what it is. It is not a sin of ignorance. It is a sin of wilfulness. No man will be cast out of the kingdom because he is ignorant of all the truths revealed by God. No man will be lost eternally because he cannot

understand all the truths of the Creed, but only—if he obstinately sets his will in resistance to the truth, if he chooses and picks here and there such truths as suit his taste, and refuses and kicks from him, wilfully, and denies and fights against the other truths. That is moral sin. Now, my brethren, let us see if we are “sound in the Faith.” Do we hold firmly all those verities which God has revealed to His Church, and which the Church teaches, as summed up in His Creed? If we do, then we are sound, then is our faith full. But if not, then it is bad coin, it is cracked, and it will be returned to us by God as not current coin; He will utterly refuse this cracked, clipped, disfigured, imperfect faith. Faith must be full.

III. It must also be fruitful. In another word, it must be alive. There is a living faith, and there is a dead faith, and the difference between them is that a *dead faith does nothing*, and a living faith is faithful in good works. What is the use of a dead horse? It will not draw a cart, it will not plough a furrow. A dead faith is as worthless as a dead horse. It is nothing but an old dead, rotten carcase, from which the life has gone. It does nothing. A living faith is one which works hard. As surely as the beating of the heart proclaims the presence of natural life in you, so does an active faith proclaim the presence of spiritual life in you. A real living faith cannot be idle, it must do something. It must show itself by its works. You sometimes hear people discuss Faith and Works, and argue and quarrel over their respective merits. There

is no need to argue and quarrel over the matter. It lies in a nutshell. If faith is alive, it must produce fruit, it must show itself, but if faith be dead, then it is of no use at all—no more use than old carrion. Now you will understand what S. James meant when he says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? Faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Here you see the Apostle is telling you exactly what I have said. Faith is no faith at all if it be like the faith of the devils, who believe, but there all ends—*they do nothing*. Faith to be worth anything must be alive and fruitful.

So now, try to recollect the three F's that go to make a good Faith, which will pass current with God.

It must be Firm.

It must be Full.

It must be Fruitful.

HOPE.

(Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

ROM. VIII. 24.

"We are saved by Hope."

I SPOKE to you last Sunday, and the Sunday before that, on Faith, and I am going to speak to you now about Hope. When David in one of the Psalms is declaring his confidence in God, he speaks of Him as his shepherd, who leads him into green pastures, and beside the waters of comfort, and then he goes on to say that God will be his refuge and strength, both when he is tempted and strays, and also when he is in trouble and death. When he has wandered from the right path, then he feels safe that God will recall him. "The Lord shall convert my soul, and bring me forth into the paths of righteousness." And also when pain, affliction, and death come over him, still the Lord will be his refuge. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me."

I think I can tell you pretty much what was in David's mind when he wrote this. He was thinking of the old days when he was a shepherd, and how in the evening,

after a long, hot day, when the shadows stole over the country, and the valleys were dark and the cold mists hung over the river, he had trudged homeward, weary, hungry, and faint. He had been on his feet all day. The stones had hurt, and the hot sands had burned his feet, and he was utterly fagged, he could scarce get along. Then he had found the comfort of his staff, which his father had put in his hands in the morning. He leaned his weight on that, and by the help of that he was able to get along down the hill side, without stumbling across the water, and up the side opposite, dragging himself along. But for the stick he really could not have got forward. That staff was his comfort and stay, when his natural strength failed.

Then he considered that God had given him something which had been, and which would be a similar support to him in his journey of life, and that gift was Hope. Many a time had he been cast down and sad at heart, his enemies had compassed him, but he could always lean on the staff of Hope, and say, "Truly my hope is even in Thee." "Our fathers hoped in Thee, they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them. They called on Thee and were holpen: they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded." "Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what is my hope?—Truly my hope is even in Thee." "Through Thee have I been holden up ever since I was born,—Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for: Thou art my hope, even from my youth."

The prophet Isaiah makes use of the same resemblance, when he rebukes the chosen people from setting their hope on Egypt, and turning from God. He says, "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt, whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it." (Isaiah xxxvi. 6.) You must understand that the Jews were much afflicted by the Assyrians, who threatened them with destruction. Then, instead of relying on God, they set their hope on the King of Egypt that he would come up with an army, and deliver them. This was a vain hope. They got no help from that quarter, but God helped them, for He smote, in one night, a hundred fourscore and five thousand of the Assyrians. Thus—God showed His people that in their perplexity and danger, they must place their hope in Him, and not in man. Hope in Him is a staff that will bear leaning on. Hope in man is a staff that breaks and wounds the hand that rests on it.

So, now, my dear friends, as you go along the journey of life—take with you the staff of Hope, that God gives you. I think I can tell you something else that Hope is like. It is like a cord by which a man holds to keep him from falling, when hanging over a precipice. Let us imagine a man at the bottom of a mine shaft, or of a well. A cord is let down to him which he lays hold of, and by the aid of this cord he drags himself to the top. Now for this purpose three things are requisite. The cord must be sufficiently strong, sufficiently long, and fastened securely. If the rope be too slender, it will give way, and snap with

his weight. If it be not long enough, it will not reach him, and if it be not firmly secured at the top, then it will come down with him. This spring some of you have been doing some planting for me on a very steep slope. The way you did it, was to take a rope, drive a crowbar into the solid earth, and fasten the cord by a slip-knot to it, then to go over the edge and down the slope holding the rope, and putting in the young trees here and there. Now, in order that you might do this safely, we had to be satisfied that the cord was sufficiently *strong*, to bear your weight, sufficiently *long* to enable you to reach the places to be planted, and *firmly fixed* at the top. Safety, life depended on these three conditions.

Well! —In the same way Hope must be sufficiently *strong*, sufficiently *long*, and be *firmly fixed*, if you are to pull up the steep slope of life, into perfect safety in Heaven. I told you last Sunday, that Faith to be worth anything, must have three characteristics. Hope, also, to be worth anything, must have three qualities. It must be strong enough, long enough, and be secured firmly above.

I will now explain to you what I mean, more particularly.

1. Hope must be strong. That is to say, Hope must be like Faith, a stout, steady, and firm virtue, not giving way under trial, for it is exactly in trial that Hope is needed. I told you that David speaks of Hope as the staff that stays him up when he is weary, and walking in slippery places. Now, consider, what is the good to a weary man of a stick that bends? Will he thank you for a light

bamboo cane that has no strength in it? No. Will he thank you for an alder stick that is hollow and ready to snap if he leans his weight on it? No. What he wants is a stout thorn stick, that will hold and bear him up, however heavily he may press on it, that will hold him up, when his foot slips, or a stone rolls from under him. So with Hope. What you want is not an uncertain hope, a hope that is speedily dashed, a hope that is hollow. No,—you want a sure and certain Hope, a Hope that maketh not ashamed. Hope, says the apostle, is an anchor of the soul. The captain of a ship gets an anchor of the best wrought iron. He won't go to sea with one of cast iron that will snap when a sudden strain is put on it, nor with one of lead, that will bend, and has no catch and endurance in it. Hope must be of the best quality, of sterling metal, well wrought, and able to hold fast, or it is no good at all.

Listen now to what S. Paul says of his Hope, “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” That is to say, though I suffer cold and hunger, and nakedness, though I have nothing here that makes life enjoyable, but am full of misery and want, yet I reckon that all this suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Though here I be despised and maltreated, though I be cast out of the synagogue, though men rise up against me and persecute me, though I go through shipwreck, and am stoned and beaten, and imprisoned yet I reckon that all these

sufferings are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. And though I suffer sickness, and am in pains of body and distress of mind, though I labour and see no fruit of my labours, though I go through the valley of the shadow of death, and endure for the sake of Christ and the gospel, torture and a cruel martyrdom, yet I reckon that all this suffering is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

There, my brethren, there you have a good wrought steel hope, a true anchor of the soul,—or, shall I say, a stout staff, which is indeed a stay and comfort to the weary pilgrim. I was only reading yesterday the life of the late Lord Hatherleigh—a Devonshire man—like us here; and his biographer says that during the last two years of his life, “he was like a school boy counting the days to the time when his holidays begin.” A hard and well-spent life his had been, and when hard work was over, he was full of hope, of sanguine hope; he counted the days till his holidays began. That is the sort of *strong* hope I want you to strive to obtain.

11. Now we go to the next point: After a strong hope comes a *long* hope—I mean a long lasting hope, a persevering hope. It is not only necessary for a weary traveller to have a strong staff in his hand, but to keep it always in his hand. It is not sufficient if he has it for a little bit, and then is without it. He must hold it from first to last. He must have it for a long time, that is, for all his journey. So must you have hope for a long

time, that is, for all the journey of life. If hope fails, then comes despair. Hope is daylight ; despair is darkness. There is no walking aright and making way in pitch darkness. The gift of perseverance is one that we must pray for. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved," said our Lord. (S. Matt. x. 22.) "Gird up the loins of your mind," says S. Peter; "be sober and hope to the end," (1 Peter i. 13.) To despair is to be without hope. Now how can a man be without hope and retain his faith? If he believes in God—in God's love and mercy—he must hope. If he has ceased to hope, he must have ceased to believe. In the seventy-first Psalm, David says, "Thou art my hope, O Lord God : Thou art my trust from my youth." And he goes on to say how that when he was in trouble, his enemies had spoken against him, saying, "God hath forsaken him—there is none to deliver him," nevertheless he was not cast down, he trusted in God, and prayed to God, and "I will hope," he adds, "continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more." Because of this persevering hope, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God—and Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side."

III. The third requisite is, that hope should be fixed aright—I mean that it should be fixed on God, and His promises, and not fixed on anything here. When the Jews hoped in Egypt, Egypt failed them. When they flew in hope to God, God stood by them, and delivered them. Now we can easily prove for ourselves what is our hope,

and where it is fixed, by asking ourselves one question : Is that, on which our hope is fixed, something eternal, or something that will be gone after a little while? Everyone hopes for something; but is that something that will last for ever?

The wise man says, "The hope of the ungodly is like dust, that is blown away with the wind; like a thin froth, that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke, which is dispersed here and there with the tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day; but the righteous live for evermore. Their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High; therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with His right hand shall He cover them, and with His arm shall He protect them," (Wisd. v. 14-16.) Here you have the two hopes compared: that which is fixed on things that perish, and which passes away and is lost, and that which is fixed on God—on His almighty power and providence, and on the reward He has prepared for those who hope and trust in Him. Where is your hope tied? Is it fast in heaven, to the throne of God? Or is it attached to some poor, mean, fleeting trifles of earth? On that question everything depends, as everything depends to the man hanging by a rope over a precipice whether the cord is fast to a bar of iron planted firm, or tied only to a wisp of grass.

S E R M O N H E A R I N G .

(Seventh Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MARK VIII. 2.

"I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat."

THE eagerness of the people to hear the word of God is very striking. On the occasion recorded in the Gospel for the day, some four thousand persons had tarried in the wilderness with Jesus three days and nights. Divers of them came from afar, they brought with them provisions which they consumed. and still they lingered on, listening to the gracious words which fell from the lips of Christ, unable to tear themselves away, lest they should lose some precious piece of instruction, miss some important truth which He was going to give to those who heard Him.

On another occasion, we read that they pressed upon Him to hear the word of God, so as to oblige Him to enter into a ship out of which to instruct them.

On again another occasion, when He had retired for rest and prayer into a desert place, the people sought Him out, "and came unto Him, and stayed Him, that He should not depart from them."

Once again, when He was speaking in a house, the crowd of eager people desiring to hear Him was so great, that four men carrying one sick of the palsy, could not push their way in at the door, and to reach Him at all, were obliged to go up on the roof, take off some of the tiles, and let the sick man down by ropes to the feet of Christ.

You will agree with me, that in these events we see great eagerness to hear the word of God, an eagerness which we see little of now-a-days.

What was it that woke this eagerness? We see now-a-days a great rush to hear a popular preacher,—but there you have the whole truth in a few words. The people go to hear the preacher. They do not go to hear the truth, and to take it home with them, and form their lives on the truth they have heard, they go—to hear the man, to be interested, excited, perhaps amused by the cleverness, eloquence, and earnestness of the preacher. What the truth is he has to declare, is a small matter,—it is stale old news, —but how he says it is the great matter, and what they go to hear.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ was by no means what we should call now a Popular Preacher. He was very simple, plain, and to the point in what He said. and there was nothing like eloquence in His way of saying it. We know what His sermons were like, for we have one given us as a sample, the Sermon on the Mount. What eloquence is to be found in that? None. Would that pass muster as a fine sermon now? Certainly not. It would be pulled

to pieces and found fault with by a congregation directly they got outside the porch, and were walking through the churchyard. If you will look at that Sermon, you will see that it consists of nothing else but plain truths, put in a plain way. No figures of rhetoric, no flourishes of oratory. All quite simple and straightforward declarations of what is right and what is wrong.

Do you think that such a sermon as that would attract hearers now? No.—I do not think it would, because hearers now go to hear the Preacher, not to learn the Truth.

I will not say that there is no excuse for people now, and exalt these Jews so very highly before them as examples, because that would not be fair. Our Lord was teaching *new truths* to the people, and what He taught had therefore all the charm of novelty. The people heard from Him what they could hear from no one else. That is why they were so eager to listen to Him, that is why they pressed upon Him, that is why they pursued Him into the desert. What He taught was what they had never heard before, and could hear from no other teacher.

On the other hand, those truths which you are taught every Sunday are familiar to you. You have heard them from your childhood, you can hear them in every church, and so they have to you none of the attraction of novelty.

Because they do not possess this attraction, you become indifferent to the truths themselves, and anxious only about the way in which they are put. So, by degrees you come

to forget that the truths taught are the things which are of vital importance, and to make everything of the manner and the ability of the preacher. This is why sermons do little or no good. The hearers do not think of the words spoken as concerning their eternal interests, but only as pleasing their fancy, and suiting their taste.

But, I should wish you to remember that the preacher is a messenger from God, and that the message he delivers is the important thing for you to receive, and that the manner of its delivery is of secondary, nay, of third-rate importance.

The citizens of Florence once sent an ambassador (called Janott Manetti) to Alphonso, king of Aragon, with a message. Mannetti was a clumsy, stuttering, tedious speaker, and when he had to address the king, he went into a long, rambling, badly constructed address, which lasted so long that the courtiers, who stood by, were tired out. The king, however, never took his eyes off the speaker, nor allowed his attention to flag for a moment. Someone said to him afterwards, "how could your majesty endure to listen to such a wretched, tedious speaker?" "I was not interested in the speaker," answered the king, "but I was very eager to hear the message sent me." Now we, the ministers of God, come to you with messages from God; and although we may be poor speakers, and unable to deliver our message well, still, that which concerns you, and that which is of paramount importance, is what we have to say, and not how we say it.

There are three points I would press upon you, if you are at all in earnest.

1. I would ask you before hearing a sermon to ask God to prepare your heart to receive His truth.

2. Next, to be very attentive whilst a sermon is being preached, to gather from it something profitable.

3. After you have heard a sermon, not to forget it, but to form a resolution to put in practice what you have been taught.

1. One great reason why the Word of God produces so little fruit is that so little preparation is made to receive it. Our Lord represents the Word of God as seed sown, and you know that it is useless to sow seed in a field unless the soil has first been ploughed and harrowed, and is ready to receive it. The seed sown over an unploughed field does not sink into the soil, but lies on the surface, and is carried away by the wind. You come to Church on Sunday, but do you in any way prepare your hearts with meekness to receive the engrafted word? Do you not rather come with your hearts overgrown with the cares of life? with your thoughts on everything except God? with your desires not directed towards the reception of the truth?

Now there are two dispositions of the soul, which ought to go before sermon hearing. to render sermon hearing of profit. There should be a right intent, and there should be prayer. That is to say, there should go before a

sincere desire to learn, and prayer to God to soften the heart to receive the instruction given.

This, then, is the first point I would urge on you. Prepare to hear the Word of God, and then there is some chance of your profiting by what you hear.

11. Next, be very attentive whilst a sermon is being preached, to gather out of it something profitable to your soul. A sermon is a good sermon only on one condition, that it contains some instruction. It is not a good sermon if it be merely interesting, or eloquent. It is a good sermon only, when those who have heard it can say, when they leave Church, we have been taught some truth to-day. Now a sermon must be very bad indeed unless it contains something solid and useful. It may be a dull sermon, it may be badly delivered, it may lack illustrations; but it almost always has some teaching in it, and the teaching is that which is of importance, not the setting that surrounds it. What is the living part of the apple? It is not the sweet flesh of the fruit, but the pip within. The flesh of the apple rots away, but the pip takes root, and springs up, and grows into an apple tree. So with a sermon,—it is not the garnish and outside matter that is of value; that which is of value to your soul is the pip—the truth contained in it. Listen attentively for that.

There was in ancient times, in Greece, a great orator, called Demosthenes, and he addressed the Athenians on an occasion of great national importance, to urge on them

the peril of the state. As he spoke, he saw his hearers listless, whispering to each other, or nodding in sleep. They would not listen to his exhortation. Then, suddenly he stopped, and began in another strain. "Now about something quite different. I will tell you a story about the shadow of a donkey." Instantly those who were whispering to each other, ceased and sat attentive, and the dozers opened their eyes and pricked up their ears. So Demosthenes told them the fable of the robbers and the ass' shadow; and when he had done, he burst forth in this rebuke: "See, when I speak to you of the danger of the state, you will not listen, when I talk to you of a donkey's shadow, you are all ears."

Now, my brethren, is it not much the same with you? If you are told a story, and spoken to about anything that is of no vital importance, or anything that concerns your daily concerns, you give close attention; but when you are spoken to of the things that concern your eternal welfare, you hardly listen, and make no effort to comprehend that which you are taught.

III. Lastly, when you have heard a sermon, do not forget it, but try to make some use of what you have heard. Remember, that seed sown in the ground, is laid there that it may grow and bear fruit; and instruction given, is given that you may profit by it. God's message is conveyed to you that you may take it to heart and conform your lives to His will as declared to you. "Be ye doers of the word," says the Apostle, "and not hearers

only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, *he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work*, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (S. James i. 22-5.)

A GOOD LIFE.

(Eighth Sunday after Trinity.)

ST. MATT. VII. 17.

“ Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.”

IN the Gospel for to-day, taken from the Sermon on the Mount, our Blessed Lord compares men to trees, and shows that just as men expect fruit-trees to produce a crop, so does God expect men to bring forth the fruit of good works. When you have had an appletree in your garden for several years, and it bears no apples, you cut it down, so that something more profitable may be planted in its place, and when God has got an useless man or woman in the garden of His Church, He removes that person, and gives the place to another. “ Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Before Our Lord began His Mission, S. John the Baptist preached the same truth, and warned the Jews of the fate that would attend them, unless they brought forth fruits meet for repentance. “ Now,” he said, “ the axe is laid unto the root of the trees : therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

When God introduced the children of Israel into the Promised Land, He gave them this command, "Thou shalt not destroy the trees by forcing an axe against them : for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down,—only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut down." (Deut. xx. 19-20.) And one of the great offences committed by Ahab, was, that he turned the useful vineyard of Naboth into an useless pleasure garden.

God, by His prophet, rebuked the Jews because of their unprofitableness. He likened the Jewish Church to a vine which He had tilled and dressed, and when He came to it, seeking grapes, it brought forth only the wild, sour, unpalatable grapes. This means that He had given to the Jewish Church great privileges, He had given it instruction in the truth, light, and guidance, and He expected some good result. But, instead of good result, He met with unthankfulness, discontent, hardheartedness, and forgetfulness of Him. "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?—The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant : and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry." (Isai. v. 4-7.) The prophet Ezekiel tells us what God will do with the worthless vine. "What is the vine tree (that produces no fruit) more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the

trees of the forest? Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work? Behold, when it was whole, it was meet for no work: how much less shall it be meet yet for any work, (that is, good for anything) when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem." (Ezek. xv. 2-6.)

You must understand what the prophet means. He says in effect, this:—You, house of Israel, are a vine of the Lord's planting. Now of a vine, grapes are expected. No man thinks of gathering grapes of thorns, or of beech trees, or of fir; but of a vine, grapes are expected. So a vine is carefully kept and dressed and pruned. The wood is good for nothing, but the fruit is excellent. Now, if the vine does not yield grapes, then it is cut down, made into a bundle, and treated like the faggots of firewood cut from the forest, faggots of beech and fir. It is cast on the fire, or into the oven.

Just as God expected the Jewish Church to bring forth fruit, so does He demand fruit of the Christian Church, which is His vineyard now, and of every Christian who is planted, like a vine, in the vineyard of the Church. Behold, the axe is laid unto the root of every tree now, as it was of old; therefore now also, as of old, every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Now,—in order that we may be good, profitable vines in the vineyard of Christ,—fruit-bearing trees in His orchard, three things are necessary. Try to remember what these three things are.

1. Knowledge of what is to be done. 2. A will to do. 3. Energy to perform.

1. In the first place you must know what it is that God expects of you. It is for this reason that you are called upon to hear sermons. The prophetic, that is, the teaching office, is what God's priests are required to exercise, as well as the sacerdotal office.

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, the excuse given by the men in the market-place for standing idle, was, that no man had hired them. They had been given nothing to do. They had not been told where to go, and what to set about doing. But we can make no such excuse, we have been set in the vineyard of Christ, and we have been set our work, our several duties, and Christ has appointed His ministers as overseers to tell His workmen what duties are required of them—what they have to do, and what they must leave alone. When you were little children, you learned your Catechism, and in that Catechism you were taught your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour. You come to Church every Sunday, and every Sunday you have some duty or other urged on you. Thus it comes about that you can not plead as an excuse for doing nothing, that you do not know

what God expects of you. You have been taught, and well taught, and you know your duty perfectly well.

II. The next requisite is an important one. The first requires little effort on your part, it consists in listening and receiving; but the second is spontaneous. Having learned your duty, the next thing required is,—a will to discharge it. No one can give you that. You must have that yourself. We, the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries, are responsible for the teaching. We shall be called to account if you are left in ignorance of your duty. But our responsibility ends there. We cannot make you *will* to do it. The will to perform in you is like the living force in the plant that makes it shoot forth and produce leaves. The teaching is like the digging about the roots, and manuring of the plant. Now you know that however much good manure, and watering and cultivation may be given to a plant, unless there be life in the root, all the labour and dung given it are wasted. So with you Christians: all the care and instruction given are of no use, unless there be within the ready will to profit by the teaching—the ready will to take up and feed on the nourishment afforded. It is of no avail to offer food to a man unless he has got an appetite. He will reject it. So our Lord says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." There must be a will to learn and make use of what is learned, or all the good advice and instruction in all the books in the world, and in the mouths of the most eloquent preachers,

profit nothing. In the Acts of the Apostles, we have the people of Berea commended, because "they were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind." And S. Peter describes this eagerness to receive and profit by the word, after the likeness of infants longing for, and stretching their hands toward, and crying after their mother's breast. "As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (1 Peter ii. 2.) Observe how careful he is to say exactly what he means. He does not urge on the people to whom he writes an eagerness to hear for the sake of hearing—an eagerness after the sweetness of the Gospel, as the eagerness of a child for lollipops, just because they give momentary pleasure. No, S. Peter guards himself against being so misunderstood. He says "Desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." We are to desire Christian instruction, because it is necessary for our spiritual growth. We must long after it, not because it is nice, but because it is nutritious. This ready will was present in S. Peter himself, as our Lord informs us, "the spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." Unfortunately, among Christians now there is found very little readiness, that is, real hearty will. They are prepared to admit that the flesh is weak; but, alas! there is no ready spirit behind the frail flesh.

III. The last requisite is, Energy to perform. In the first place, there must be *knowledge* of the way of God;

then must come a *will* to walk in it, and lastly, an *effort* to walk. Unless these three requisites be found in combination, the end of the journey will not be reached. How are you to get to Launceston? To get there: first, you must know the way; then you must wish to go there, and thirdly, you must set out on your way thither. So if you want to reach Heaven, you must be taught how you are to get there, you must desire to reach it, and you must set out on your journey to it. That is very simple, and very intelligible. You come to Church, and hear a sermon; but the preacher is nothing but a sign-post, indicating the way you should walk. S. Paul writes of the unregenerate man, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." This is an unsatisfactory condition—it is a dangerous condition to be in. Instruction is not enough, the will is not enough; an effort must be made to tread the road that leads to life everlasting. The plant must grow, and it must bring forth fruit. The plant that, after having been well manured, runs to stalk and leaf, is an unprofitable plant—the manure is given, the attention of the gardener is given, that the tree may bring forth fruit.

Our Lord passed a fig tree, and He went to it and felt among the leaves, seeking fruit; and when He found that it bore none, He cursed it, and it withered away. That was a symbolical act; He meant thereby a lesson, first to the Jews and then to us; and the lesson was, that He expects of every tree that His heavenly Father has

planted, not only growth and profession, but also the fruit of a Christian life. "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord ! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven."

EVERYTHING COMES TO LIGHT.

(Fifth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XVI. 1.

"There was a certain rich man, which had a steward ; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods."

THE steward in the parable had no doubt been going on for some time in his dishonest practices, in unconsciousness that he was being watched, and that his conduct would be reported to his employer. He had begun with small dishonesties, and not having been found out, he had advanced to greater, trusting in his good fortune, and in the stupidity or want of observation of those who surrounded him. But men were not so blind as he supposed, those whom he least suspected of watching him, had their eyes upon him; and when they had satisfied themselves that he was robbing his master, they spoke of it, and so the report of the steward's dishonesty came to the ears of the landlord.

The devil always persuades those whom he lures into evil ways, that their sin will not be found out. That is his invariable course. No man commits a crime without

being persuaded in his own heart that it never will be known. But, as the old saying goes:—

“There was never a thread so slenderly spun
But some day or other it comes to the sun.”

Cain slew his brother Abel when no man was looking, and he hoped that Adam and Eve would suppose that he had fallen a prey to a wild beast; but at once, God called to the murderer, “What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.”

The brethren of Joseph sold him to the Midianitish merchants, and then steeped his garment in the blood of a kid, and took it to their father, and led him to suppose that Joseph had been torn by a lion. Years passed away, and the brethren flattered themselves that their crime would never be found out. Every year that passed made the prospect of the truth being discovered less likely, and yet—the day was drawing surely nigh, when the man they had wronged would stand before them, and say, “I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt.”

David had committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, and the king thought that his act was hidden from public notice, he had managed matters very cleverly, he had obtained the death of Uriah directly after, in a manner apparently very simple, and then he had married the widow. He flattered himself that nothing was known of what he had done, that no one suspected him of having caused the death of Uriah, but, all at once, there stood before him Nathan the prophet, who spoke out the truth before all

the court, denounced his crime, and said, "Thou didst this thing secretly, but God will publish thy sin, and punish thee openly before all Israel, and before the sun."

Our Lord himself warns you not to be deceived by the Devil with his promises of concealment. He says, "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light ; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops." (S. Luke xii. 2, 3.) Again, "Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest ; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad." (S. Luke viii. 17.) And the wise king, as the sum of his great, sad lesson of life, says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter—God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Eccl. xii. 14.)

You see then that you are fully warned against the fraud of Satan, when he endeavours to impose on you, and tempt you to evil with the assurance that you will not be found out. Christ expressly tells you that not only your evil acts, but your evil words as well will be divulged, and S. Paul adds, that even the "very counsels of the heart" will be made manifest.

Now I do not think men would fall into sin half so readily as they do, if they were fully assured that what they do would be certain to come out. And yet experience,

without the word of Revelation, might assure them of that. Is it not true that everyone is on the alert to mark some evil in his neighbour? Is it not true that no news flies so fast as a bit of scandal? Is it not true that a wrong deed comes to light almost inevitably, and sometimes in the most unexplained and unaccountable manner? Indeed, every man is surrounded by as many spies on his actions as he has neighbours, and nothing is more difficult than to hide his acts from their eyes.

King Saul went in pursuit of David into the wilderness. He sought to capture and kill him. He hunted him down with all his army of three thousand men, hunting him, as David himself said, like a mad dog. He occupied all the passes out of the desert. He put watchmen on the hill tops. He went all over the country, sweeping it, as a woman sweeps a room, determined that David should not escape him. One hot day, Saul was very tired, and he found a cave, and went into it, that he might lie in its pleasant coolness, out of the fierce heat of the sun, and go to sleep. So he told the soldiers to keep sharp watch outside, but he himself went into the dark cool cave, and folded his cloak, put it under his head, and went fast asleep, fully assured that he was safe from every danger, and quite alone. Safe!—why he had several hundred men guarding the entrance of the cavern. Alone!—why he had given strict orders that no one should come in. Thus, in perfect security of mind he dropped asleep. But—he little knew that David, and his three hundred men were

•

already there—before him, hiding in that very cave, drawn back against the rocky sides, screened by the projections of the stones, and that three hundred pairs of eyes were on him as he folded his cloak, and made himself a pillow, and yawned, and stretched himself out, and went to sleep. Then David stepped towards him on tiptoe, and cautiously snipped off one corner of his mantle, and after that stole back to his hiding place.

Presently Saul woke, sat up, rubbed his eyes, muttered something about the time, and the pleasant refreshing sleep he had enjoyed, cursed David for giving him so much trouble in hunting him, and swore to have his head off, if only he caught him ; then he sauntered out of the cave entrance, and mounted his horse, and told his soldiers to go on further. Now, as soon as he had reached the next hill, David came forth out of the cave, and called to the king, and held up the lappet of his mantle that he had cut off. Then he told the king how he had slept surrounded by his enemies, and how, had David chosen, at any moment he might have been killed.

I have told you this story, because it is a good illustration of the false security in which sinners sleep. They think that no man sees them. They suppose that what they do is known to none ; and yet they are surrounded by eyes that watch them, and when they least expect it they are observed. Wherever you are, whatever you do, eyes are watching you ; not only the eyes of men, but those of the angels also, and of God Himself. “ O Lord,

Thou hast searched me out, and known me ; Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising ; Thou understandest my thoughts long before. Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and spiest out all my ways. For lo, there is not a word in my tongue, but Thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether. If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day. Yea, the darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day ; the darkness and light to Thee are both alike."

Little, indeed, is the chance of the evil deed escaping the eyes of men, there is none of its escaping the eyes of the angels and of God. The hidden thing of darkness is almost sure to be brought to light in this life, it is quite sure to be made manifest hereafter. It is almost sure to be known of man now, it is quite sure to be known of men and angels at that day, when all things are made manifest.

Try to recollect, whenever tempted to do that which is wrong, however great may be the chance of concealment, that it is certain, sooner or later, to be known, that, at the very time it is being done, you are watched by the eyes of the angels and of evil spirits ; the first watch you with sorrow, the latter with exultation. You can no more hide yourself from the eyes of watchers than could Saul in the cave. You are always seen, always in public ; your every act has got observers. You cannot even think an evil thought but it is known.

“Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him ; and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob. And these words of Esau, her elder son, were told to Rebekah. And she sent and called Jacob, her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.” Do you observe? Esau merely thinks *in his heart* that he will kill Jacob ; he does not confide his intention to any one, and yet his purpose gets out, nobody can say how, and reaches his mother’s ears. How often this is the case ! Your very thoughts are read, and your intentions are known before you have given them words. How true are the words of the son of Sirach : “A sinner saith in his heart, Who seeth me? I am compassed about in darkness ; the walls cover me, and nobody seeth me ; what need I to fear? Such a man only feareth the eyes of men, and knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun, beholding all the ways of men, and considering the most secret parts.” (Eccles. xxiii. 18-19.)

Even if a thing be hidden from men, it cannot be hidden from God. And, remember, we are surrounded by accusers. The eyes of the evil spirits are on us, who accuse us before God, who represent before Him our evil deeds, just as the angels bear up, and present before Him, our prayers and good deeds. There is nothing hid that is not made manifest. Sleeping or waking, we are surrounded by eyes, looking

out of the darkness upon us, watching our every act, and when we transgress we are charged with our transgressions before God, and His justice appealed to against us.

We may think that what we do will never be known, but we deceive ourselves with a vain hope. That which is done in secret will be shewn openly, that which is whispered in the ear will be proclaimed on the housetops. The day will come when the Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts.

“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth, how long shall all wicked doers speak so disdainfully, and say, Tush, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Take heed, ye unwise among the people : O ye fools, when will ye understand ? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear : or he that made the eye, shall he not see ?”

Live ever, then, in the thought that whatever you do, you are seen, and whatever you say, you are heard, and that you will be called to give an account, before angels and men, for what you do, and for what you say. You are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, and “there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known.”

VISITATIONS.

(Tenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XIX. 44.

"Thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Do you remember the story in the Book of Esther, of the honour shown to Mordecai? Mordecai, the Jew, had discovered a plot to murder King Ahasuerus, and he divulged it. Thereby the king's life was saved, but Mordecai received no reward.

Some time after, Haman, a great noble, obtained from the king an order for a general massacre of the Jews throughout his realm. "The letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month." Before this day arrived, the king recollected the signal service rendered him by Mordecai, and he ordered Haman to array Mordecai in the royal apparel, and mount him on the king's own horse, and to lead him through the streets of the city, and

proclaim before him, "Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour."

Now, what do you think were the feelings of Mordecai during this ride? We are told that, knowing the destruction wherewith he and his people were threatened, he had rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth, with ashes, and had cried with a loud and bitter cry. With his eyes red with tears, his heart convulsed with sorrow, his head covered with dust and ashes, and with sackcloth on his flesh, he goes through this parade, unmoved by it, wholly indifferent to it. He knows that, in only a few more days, his people and himself will be given up to butchery. What then is this brief pomp to him? He values it not, nay, he hates it,—it is a mockery of his grief.

Now let us turn to Our Blessed Lord. He is approaching the end of His life on earth. He knows that He is about to die a cruel death, and that His blood will descend in condemnation on the heads of His murderers. He knows that but a few years will elapse before Jerusalem will be destroyed, the temple utterly ruined, so that not one stone will be left upon another, and that the Jews will be dispersed throughout the world. He had laboured among this people and they had not received Him, He had witnessed to them, and they had refused His testimony. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." He had visited them in love and mercy, and they had not known the time of their visitation. Now they would be visited in wrath and condemnation.

With these thoughts in His heart He drew near to Jerusalem. Then the apostles mounted Him on an ass's colt, and cast their garments upon the colt, and as they went they spread their clothes in the way, and cut down branches from the trees and strewed them in the way, and shouted, and sang "Hosanna! Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." A triumphal march! Honour and worship shown unto Christ at last! At length comes recognition of His mission! But—"When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Christ meekly receives the honours shown Him, but He knows how transitory they are. He knows that they who are so eager to serve Him now, in a few days will forsake Him. He knows that those lips which now shout "Hosanna!" will soon be yelling "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" He knows that the hands which are now tearing down the palm branches to strew in His way, will be plucking reeds and thorns wherewith to smite, mock, and wound Him. He knows how worthless this brief honour

is. As He rides in lowly pomp to Jerusalem, his eyes are filled with tears for His people and city, which are doomed to destruction.

But why is this destruction menaced? Our Lord tells us. Because the Jews did not recognise in the day of trial the things that belonged to their peace; because they knew not the time of their visitation. The visitation which they did not know had been foretold, so that they ought to have known it. The prophets had spoken of Christ's coming, they had described the nature of the visitation. "He shall visit and redeem His people." His was to be a visitation of mercy: He was to come meek and lowly, as a man of sorrows, binding up the broken hearts, preaching deliverance to the captives, and giving sight to the blind. God, moreover, sent the Baptist before Him, to prepare His way, by the preaching of repentance.

But the Jews would neither hear the prophets, nor John the Baptist, nor the testimony of Christ to Himself; they shut their ears to His teaching and their eyes to His miracles. Thus the time of their visitation passed. Their chance of salvation slipped away. The things that belonged to their peace were proclaimed, but they knew them not. At length they crucified their Lord and King.

Then came a second visitation, this time a visitation of wrath and vengeance. Jerusalem was given over to utter destruction, as Christ had foretold, and the Jews were either slaughtered or dispersed throughout the world.

Did they know this second visitation? No—they recognised this as little as they had recognised the former. And till they recognise it, the curse lies on them. "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, *until* the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

First came the visitation of love, then the visitation of judgment, but the aim of both is the same—the awakening of those visited to the things that belong to their peace. Till the Jewish nation recognises Christ, as Him that should come, the hand of judgment is laid on them, the visitation of condemnation and chastisement is theirs. Their only way of recovery of their lost privileges, and of the lost favour of God is through acknowledgment of the visitation of God.

My brethren! As the Jews were visited, so are we. As they were first of all visited in mercy and love, so are we. And as surely as they were visited, secondly, with severity and in anger, because they knew not the time of their first visitation, so will it be with us. If we refuse to know the things that belong to our peace, when visited in love, God will visit us with a rod.

Let us see how Christ visits us.

1. First He visits you as our Teacher. He came to the Jews as a "Rabbi sent from God," to teach them the truth, to reveal to them the will of God, and the way of life. So does Christ visit us as our Teacher. All the holy lessons we get from His word, are given you, and given to you by Him. We, His ministers, speak to you only in His

name, we teach you those things which are necessary for you to know and do for your souls health. You are taught the Creed ; and the truths contained in the Creed are fully explained to you. These truths are no invention of man, they are the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are truths that were hid from the wise and prudent of olden times, but are now taught to babes in the family of Christ. Many prophets and kings have desired to know the things that ye know and have not known them, and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them.

You must remember, brethren, that you have both to believe the truth and to obey the will of God, and you are instructed in those verities which you are bound to believe, and in that will which you are required to obey. This, then, is the time of your visitation, when Christ through His appointed ministry comes to you as a Teacher to instruct you in everything necessary for salvation. God grant that you may learn, in this your day, the things thus belonging to your peace, and may know the time of your visitation.

II. Next, Christ visits you as a Shepherd. The Shepherd goes to his sheep and cares for them, and leads them to green pastures, and sees that they have all they need for their good, that they may grow and be strong. "Thus saith the Lord God ; Behold I, even I, will both search My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered ; so will I seek out My sheep, and will

deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers. I will feed them in a good pasture,—they shall lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel.” (Ezek. xxxiv. 11-14.)

You will notice that, in this passage, God speaks of two offices of the Shepherd, and he undertakes to execute both. The first office is to seek the wandering and bring into the One Fold, and the other is to feed the sheep in the Fold. Now there are two sorts of wandering: a sheep of the fold of God may wander from the Truth, or wander from the way of the Commandments, that is to say, man may stray, through error in belief, or through sin. God promises to seek out both the heretic and the sinner, and bring both back to the Truth and to Obedience. Now God has established His Fold on earth, the Church, and, as you all know, there are always some who break away from it, following false doctrines, and others who fall into sin and so stray from the will of God. Christ, as the Good Shepherd, goes after both. He pleads with each, to bring each back, him who is in error, to the true fold—His Church, and him who has sinned, to repentance and a new life. It behoves all who have left the Church, and fallen into error, and all who have strayed into the ways of sin, to know the time of their visitation, to listen to the voice

of the Good Shepherd whilst they may, before those things which concern their salvation are hid from their eyes.

Next, the Shepherd feeds his sheep. Christ visits His fold and feeds His elect therein with heavenly food. He gives grace to strengthen, and, above all, in the Sacrament of the Altar, He gives the Bread of Life, whereof whosoever eateth shall live for ever. It behoves all who are within the Fold to know the time of their visitation, and whilst the Lord's hand is open, offering to them grace and the divine food, to draw near with grateful hearts and partake.

III. Lastly, God visits in chastisement. When His visitation of love fails to awaken, then He visits with severity. He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. When the heart, deadened by the good things and the pleasures of this life, fails to realise the visitation of love, then God brings suffering upon man. He afflicts, in order that He may awaken man to a sense of the importance of time, that He may rouse him to a knowledge that this is indeed a time of visitation. He sends suffering, He sends privation, He sends bereavement, He sends disappointment—that He may force us to shake off our lethargy and redeem the time. And He visits in punishment. “I will visit their offences with the rod, and their sin with scourges.”

God did not visit Jerusalem in judgment till it had rejected Christ, and turned a deaf ear to the Holy Spirit. Then He visited it with a terrible overthrow—because it

knew not the time of its visitation. But still there is hope extended to it. "Your house is left unto you desolate—until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." And so, with us, the Lord may see fit to visit us with affliction, to scourge us for our transgressions, but, for all that, He visits in mercy, and He will withdraw His hand, and not consume us utterly, if only we will turn to Him, and acknowledge His visitation, saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

JUDGING OTHERS.

(Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XVIII. II.

"God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican."

IN the Gospel for to-day we have set before us two men, and their manner of praying is contrasted, also the effect of their praying is told us. The Pharisee belonged to a class of men respectable, strict in life, honourable and scrupulous to fulfil all the duties imposed on them by God. The Publican, on the other hand, belonged to a class of men not very respectable, by no means strict and honourable and scrupulous in discharging its duties. The Pharisee was proud of his nation, loved it, and the great grief at his heart was, that his people was subjected to another and a heathen power. The Publican was indifferent to the national cause, he had taken service under the oppressor of his countrymen, and he not only wrung from his brethren their taxes, but he wrung the money out of them in a remorseless and unjust manner.

We are much mistaken if we consider the Pharisees as a bad set of men. On the contrary, they were the best

men among the Jews, and our Lord in this parable shewed that out of the best class of men some might sin through spiritual pride, and He shewed also how that out of the worst class of men some might be found who would be justified because of their humility.

We have got so much into the habit of speaking of Pharisees as if they were all proud and hypocritical, that we miss the point of our Lord's teaching. The Pharisees were the salt of the Jewish nation. There were other sects, the Sadducees and the Herodians; the Sadducees were the broad-viewed men, who did not hold strictly to the revealed Law, and explained it away; and the Herodians were those who accommodated themselves to Greek ways of living, who sacrificed to their personal advantages their duty both to God and to their nation. Now it is worthy of remark that our Lord did not get a single disciple from among the latitudinarian Sadducees, nor from among the worldly Herodians. All His followers were drawn from the Pharisees. They were not luxurious and vicious, but men who lived strict, self-denying lives. Although there were hypocrites among them, it would be unreasonable to charge all the Pharisees as a body with hypocrisy, in the sense wherein we at the present day use the word. They were formalists, but then, it must be remembered that there was a reason for this. The Sadducees and the Herodians were striving to shake off and get rid of the law of Moses, and when shaking off the external observance of the ceremonies, were freeing

themselves also from the bondage of moral restraints. The Pharisee thought the only way in which to keep the nation together, was to be excessively strict as to every sort of form and ceremony. They were conscientious men, though their consciences did not always guide them aright, and among them, of course, were some who pretended to be conscientious, but who were impostors. But the Sadducees and Herodians were not conscientious people, they were people who accommodated their consciences to circumstances, and sacrificed principle to self-interest.

Not only so, but the Pharisees were very much in earnest, so earnest were they, that they alone made missionary attempts to convert the heathen; and the proselytes we hear of in the Acts of the Apostles were those converted out of heathenism by the zeal and labours of the Pharisee missionaries.

Now let us see what the Publicans were. The Publicans were the inland revenue officers who farmed the taxes and customs. They paid the Roman State so much a year for the right of collecting the taxes and customs, and then they made as much out of the people as they could. The Custom house officers examined every bale of goods exported or imported, allotted its value, more or less arbitrarily, wrote out the ticket and enforced payment. These Publicans were banded together to support each other's interest, and at once resented and defied all interference. They demanded severe laws, and put every such law into execution. Their agents were encouraged

in the most vexatious and fraudulent exactions, and a remedy was all but impossible. They overcharged whenever they had an opportunity. They brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of extorting hush-money. They detained and opened letters on mere suspicion. It was the basest of livelihoods. All this was enough to bring the class into ill-favour everywhere. In Judea and Galilee there were special circumstances of aggravation. The employment brought out all the besetting vices of the Jewish character. The Jews felt the wretchedness of their oppression through these men, and they resented it all the more bitterly because these men were Jews also, who had gone over into the service of the heathen to suck the blood of their own countrymen. So, you see, the Publicans, taken as a class, were an odious, wicked, renegade class. And the Pharisees, taken as a class, were a virtuous, and religious class.

A lesson, then, which this Gospel teaches us, is the duty of not judging individuals by the classes to which they belong. This is not a lesson usually drawn from the parable; but it is one which, if I mistake not, the parable was designed to enforce. We look to the plainer, superficial lesson—the lesson of humility—and we overlook the other, that lies deeper down, embedded in the story—a lesson quite as important as the other—the lesson that individuals are not to be judged by the classes to which they belong.

This is precisely what we are very prone to do. We

belong to one class in life, and we know really nothing of other classes ; but we form opinions about them, rightly or wrongly, and then condemn individuals belonging to these classes, as though they necessarily were guilty of the vices or follies, or weaknesses which we attribute, rightly or wrongly, to the classes in which they are.

The Pharisee knew that the class of Publicans was very base, and that generally the whole crew was grasping and dishonest, and he took it for granted that the praying Publican was as bad as his fellows. I daresay that the Publicans had a very poor opinion of the Pharisees. They regarded them as hypocrites ; nevertheless, this praying Publican, in the temple, forbore from judging the Pharisee, who stood there with him ; and so he went down to his house justified rather than that other.

You will remember the occasion when our Lord sat at meat, in the house of Simon, the leper, who was a Pharisee. As He sat there, there entered a woman that was a sinner, and she brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and anointed His feet with the ointment. "Now when the Pharisee, which had bidden Him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner."

Here you have another instance of judging. Simon knew that Mary Magdalen belonged to the most degraded

class of women—a class, as he believed, lost to all sense of shame, without virtue, without compunction ; and he judged at once that she was like the rest, and that our blessed Lord shewed ignorance in suffering her to touch Him, for her touch was contamination. But he was as wrong as the Pharisee, who prayed in the temple. He had no right to pass sentence on the woman. It was true that she belonged to an infamous class ; but then, she hated the life she had been leading, and she yearned for a better and purer life, and for pardon of the past.

Now is it not the case that we are very much disposed to judge people by the class to which they belong? We see in London, when we go to Hyde Park, handsome carriages, with well-dressed ladies driving about in them, and we know that their days and nights are spent in visiting, and dinners, and at the opera, and exhibitions of pictures, and balls,—their time is taken up in society—and we say, “What worldly people these are ! How they live for the world and pleasure only !” And yet, we may be quite wrong. A vast number may be worldly, but among them there are also a great number of excellent mothers and daughters, good conscientious women, doing their duty in the station of life to which God has called them, and never really forgetful of the life beyond, and of the God to whom they have to give an account. So we say of business men, that their time is taken up with striving to make money, and that they have souls for nothing else. That may be true of some, but not of all. Among them

there are many good God-fearing men, putting to good use the talents God has entrusted to them. The poor are disposed to judge the rich harshly, and the rich are disposed not to allow to the poor the virtues they possess. Now let us be very careful how we pass sweeping judgments. God has His saints everywhere, in every class of life. There are saints driving about in carriages in Rotten Row, and saints standing up in livery behind. There are saints in lawyers' offices, and in factories, there are saints owning large shops, and saints standing behind the counter, saints landowners, saints farmers, and saints who are day-labourers. There is no class in which God has not got His servants, and woe to us if we judge otherwise.

I will tell you something that happened to me. I suppose there is no class from which you would expect so little good as that of the dancers on the stage. One evening I was at the opera, and behind me were sitting two old ladies talking. One said to the other, "How is your daughter Mary's hand now?" "Oh, it's quite well," replied the other. "You will see her to-night in the ballet; but you may imagine how ill she was, when I tell you that she did not go to Church on Sunday morning. Poor Mary! she could not sleep for several nights, but sat rocking herself in the chair, with her hand bandaged up. Well, on Sunday evening, after tea, I said to her, Mary, let me look at your finger; and I put my knife into the gathering, and she was relieved at once. Ten minutes after I heard her cheerful voice on the stairs

singing, she was coming down ; with the unbandaged hand she had put on her bonnet, and she was going off to Church."

After that, I looked round the theatre at the richly-dressed ladies in the boxes, leaning forward, and gazing at the stage, and listening to the music ; and I thought that perhaps it passed through the mind of some beautiful lady there, "God, I thank Thee that I am not as other girls are, obliged to work and to sing, and appear in public for my living—or even as that dancing girl there."

Yet! who can say, when God hereafter makes up His jewels, whence will he gather His most precious stones? Perhaps poor Mary may be taken from the stage, and that other, who despised her, may be rejected. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5.)

THOROUGHNESS.

(Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MARK VII. 37.

"He hath done all things well."

IN every kingdom of the world you will find men in power and occupying positions of dignity, trust, and authority. They are looked up to, and are envied. They have attained their high positions either because they belong to an illustrious house, and are born and brought up to take these positions, or, because through their great abilities, assisted by some happy accident, they have been able to force their way into notice, and have as it were, gained their elevated positions at the point of the bayonet. Now-a-days, no place of trust and importance can be occupied by an incompetent person, every one who is given authority has to show his ability and his probity. He must be a first-rate, or at least a very good second-rate man, if he is to take any position in the state. It is not everyone who has a chance of mounting high on this ladder, for we are not all men of great ability, not only so, but even if we have the ability, something very much like luck

must attend us if we are to force our way into notice, and gain those fruits which others are ready to snatch at and dispute with us.

In the kingdom of heaven things are different. There also there are diversities of rewards offered ; we know that some hereafter will sit on thrones, and others will not. As one star differs from another star in glory, so will it be in the kingdom of the Resurrection. But then, the difference between the spiritual and the earthly kingdom in this, that in the Heavenly kingdom the highest and most splendid places are open to all competitors, there is no favour, there is no exaction of intellectual superiority, advantages of birth count for nothing, the principalities and thrones are open to all, male or female, bond or free, for God is no respecter of persons. In the earthly kingdom there is exacted of everyone who aspires to an office of trust that he shall be well educated ; if he have not the advantages of birth, or of fortune, he must have those of education ; but even this is not exacted of the aspirants after distinction in the heavenly kingdom. Indeed, " God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. i. 27-29.)

But then, there is some qualification needed. God does

expect something of those who ask for heavenly places. What is the qualification?

In to-day's gospel we find the answer. Jesus Christ is our pattern. We look to Him as our Leader. What was the verdict given by the people on His life and acts? They said: "He hath done all things well." The verdict was true; whatever He did, He did well. He wrought our redemption well; He instructed in the truths necessary for salvation well; He founded His kingdom well; He provided for our sanctification well. Whatever He undertook, He carried out; whatever He began, He finished; whatever His hand found to do, He did it with all His might.

This, then, is the one great qualification which is exacted by God of all those who aspire to Heavenly places—He demands *thoroughness* of men, that whatsoever they take in hand, they will do it well.

You will remember two parables that our Lord spake enforcing this truth. The one parable is that of the talents, the other that of the pounds. They are very similar in form, and altogether the same in their purpose. They were spoken to teach men, that their chances of promotion and reward depend on the thoroughness with which they do whatever work is committed to them here. If they are to be placed in heaven as rulers, they must have done all things well here on earth.

You know how unsatisfactory ready-made clothes are; the seams are run together with a sewing machine, and

the ends of the threads are left unknotted, and the buttons are put on with the ends of the thread left unfastened, so that when the clothes are worn, the seams part and the buttons come off. You say the things were just run together to sell, but not to wear.

Very well,—God will not have your work done for Him—your daily task, with the ends of the threads unfastened. You must do all things He sets you to do—*well*. Do you recollect how, when Dorcas died, the poor widows came to S. Peter, and standing about her bed on which she lay dead, they held up the garments she had made, the shawls she had knitted for them, the warm jackets she had put together for winter, and wept, and told S. Peter how well she had made all these things, and how useful they had been? Then S. Peter was touched at the goodness and the thoroughness of her work, and he took her by the hand and raised her up alive.

In the very next chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we read of a devout centurion, named Cornelius, who was praying in his house; then an angel was sent to him by God, who appeared to him and said, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God,” and therefore God saw that he was worthy to be fully instructed in the way of life.

Now I beg you to observe this. Just as the widows took the coats and the garments made by Dorcas and held them up as a memorial of the dead woman before S. Peter, so did the angels take up the prayers and the good deeds

of Cornelius and hold them up before God as a memorial of the devout centurion, and God looked on his prayers and works just as Peter looked on the coats and garments of Dorcas, and because He found they were good, thorough, and well done, He granted to Cornelius privileges, graces, and illumination such as he had never prayed for—not even imagined possible. Because of the good deeds well done of Dorcas, S. Peter raises her up to a new life; and because of the good deeds well done of Cornelius, God calls him to the new life begun at baptism, the Christian life, the life of grace, of sacramental union, of spiritual enlightenment.

Do you think that S. Peter would have been so stirred at heart as to ask God to bring Dorcas back to life, if the widows and people standing round had said to him, "Here are the coats and garments made by her; but, as you see, they were just put together anyhow. Give them a pull, or wear them for a day, and they fall to pieces. The threads were not knotted, the stitches that had been dropped in her knitting were not picked up, and the buttons come off, because the threads were just put through the holes once, and then given a twist round the shank, and left unfastened in the cloth. It was kind of her to give these things to us, but it has cost us hours of work to do properly what she had done imperfectly." No, I do not think S. Peter would have prayed for the restoration of a woman who half did what she took in hand.

Do you think, when the angels bore up to God the prayers and good deeds of Cornelius, that God would have sent His holy angel to shew the centurion the way to His Church, if He saw that the prayers that the man had prayed were only half earnest, or begun well and badly ended, partly sincere and partly insincere ; if He saw that his good works were incomplete, begun with a right intent, but never carried to the end with any thoroughness of purpose ; if He saw that he had been a careless centurion in his duties as an officer, that he had not thoroughly drilled his soldiers, and seen that they were orderly and well conducted, and did not molest the villagers and citizens where they were quartered ?

No, I do not think that God would have led him on to better things. Not having been faithful in small matters, He would not have advanced him to the charge of great things ; not having been careful to do his duty to his earthly masters, He would not have laid on him weighty duties to Him, his heavenly Master. "Well done, good and faithful servant," was the sentence on the servant who had put his Lord's goods to usury, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now, my brethren, think of this, and apply it to your own selves. You have all got your tasks set you ; the common duties of life you owe to those who are about you, and likewise those duties which you owe to God.

How do you execute these duties ? How do you do

those things which God has set you to do? Do you shew any *thoroughness* in your execution of them? Ask your own selves. Do not trifle with your own selves. Your prayers, your daily work, whatever it may be, is carried up every night and shewn to God, and He tries its quality. He sees whether the threads are left unknotted. He sees whether the work holds together, whether it is conscientiously done, good and sound, or whether it is merely run together to make a show. Let us take our duties to God. These are worship and prayer. Of what sort is your worship? Is it "well done," the homage of body, soul, and mind offered anything approaching to the excellent worship offered by the angels and spirits of just men made perfect in heaven? I do not think it is. Then again, with your prayers. Are they "well done?" Are you in earnest, devout, zealous when you pray? Do you endeavour to gather together your thoughts, and to fix them on God? Do you begin, continue, and end them in a serious frame of mind? Do you ask as if you expected to be heard? Do you address God as if you seriously believed He were present and ready to hear? Do you ask as if you were in real need of those things you ask for? Are not the prayers too often merely run together anyhow, without any strong thread fastened off of resolute purpose? The insincere, imperfect, unreal prayer will meet with no answer. If prayer is to be done, it must be done well.

Again, take repentance. Of what sort is your repent-

ance, for your many lapses and transgressions? Is there any good stuff well put together there? Alas! no. It is just a sort of show repentance, which will all go to pieces at a touch. I remember, during the American civil war, an order was sent to England for blankets for the army, and a Yorkshire firm took the contract and made the blankets of the least possible amount of staple, which they heavily charged with shoddy, that is the dust of wool. When the blankets arrived at New York, they fell to pieces, and had to be spaded away in wheelbarrows. Now I much fear that a great deal of what passes for repentance is mere *shoddy* repentance, there is, the least possible amount of staple of sincerity, and an overwhelming amount of the dust of cant expressions and pious sentiment. Such repentance as that will not do. It must be sound and good, of thorough fibre. If you are to repent at all, you must shew to God a repentance done well.

And what shall I say of the common duties of life? They are all imposed on you by God, however humble their nature may be; the work in the House of Parliament, in the office, at the desk, in the factory, in the shop, in the field, in the kitchen, in the nursery, whatever the work may be which our hands find to do, we must do all well, and then God will give us, for our work, some abundant blessing, or an exceeding great reward, above all, that we are able to ask and expect.

DUTIES, HOW TO BE PERFORMED.

(Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE X. 27.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.”

I spoke to you last Sunday about *thoroughness* in our work for God, in our fulfilment of duties owed to God and to our neighbours, and I am disposed to return to the same subject this Sunday, moved by the words of the gospel for the day. A certain lawyer asked our Blessed Lord what he must do to inherit eternal life. Christ at once turned to him, and without giving him a direct answer, asked him a question,—“What is written in the law? How readest thou?” That is to say, our Lord in effect replied thus to him, “How is it that thou, being a teacher of Israel, askest such a question? Thou art set to instruct the people in the revealed will of God. It is by observing God’s law, and obeying His will, that eternal life is to be gained. Thou, therefore, art the proper person to answer thine own question. What is written in the law? How readest thou?”

Then the lawyer replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself." He showed by his answer that he thoroughly grasped the *spirit* of the law, and was not, like so many of his countrymen, satisfied with the *letter*. When our Lord asked him, "How readest thou?" this is what He meant ; He asked, "Dost thou go to the root and heart of the matter, or dost thou content thyself with the leaves and outside?"

The answer of the man satisfied Christ, and He approved it. He said unto him, "Thou hast answered right ; this do and thou shalt live."

You will see, by the answer of the lawyer, that he fully appreciated the necessity for thoroughness. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind. What could be more thorough than such love as this? And so with love of men. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Who does not love himself supremely? "No man hateth his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it." If we love others as we love ourselves, we shall do to others as we would be done by, and what could we do more?

I do not suppose it would be possible better to express the thoroughness with which God is to be loved, and man is to love his fellow men ; and the Lord's hearty approval of the words of the young man show that he had caught

the spirit, not of the law only, but also of the gospel. According to S. Matthew, Christ repeated, ratifying the words of the lawyer. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

On a former occasion, when I was speaking to you of Faith, I told you that Faith to be approved of God must have three F's—it must be *Firm*, *Full*, and *Fruitful*. Now that I am speaking to you of duty done, of obedience to the will of God,—of the working out of our salvation, I will give you the three qualities that appertain to it in order that it may be approved and deserve eternal life. Obedience must be qualified by three P's. It must be *Prompt*, *Perfect*, and *Persevering*. Whether in doing our duty to God or to our neighbour, these three qualities must be found combined to make the discharge of our duty *thorough*. These three characteristics must mark our discharge of the first and great commandment, and of the second.

Now let us take each P separately.

1. Promptitude.—In the first place obedience to the will of God must be prompt. Let us look at our Lord Jesus Christ, and we shall see this quality in His obedience.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read,—“The law,

having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 1-7.) The writer represents God as seeing the time arrived when the consciousness of sin would be so deepened among men that they would perceive the worthlessness of the old sacrifices, as, in themselves, insufficient for the taking away of sin, and should be longing for the reality to come of which the sacrifices of bulls and goats were shadows and types. Then—the fulness of time having come, He declares that He has no pleasure in these symbolic rites, and at once—the Son replies, "Lo, I come. A body hast Thou prepared me ! A body in the womb of a Virgin Mother. I am ready to be incarnate. I am ready to go among men and reveal Thy will, O My Father. I am ready to die for the redemption of mankind. I am content to do it. I will fulfil Thy will, O My God."

And as there was in Christ this "ready mind," so must there be a "ready mind" in us. Knowing the will of God, we must be content to do it ; be prepared to cry out, Lo, I come, to do Thy will, O God.

Christ tells us of two sons. A certain father said to the eldest, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." He answered and said, "I will not;" but afterwards he repented, and went. Then he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go sir," and went not. Now which of these twain did the will of his father? The first, of course; and yet the first is no example to be followed closely. He lacked the "ready mind." He did not want to work. He wished to idle, or follow his own pursuits, and so he refused obedience. Afterwards, however, he thought better of it, and went into the vineyard. The second son put on an appearance of prompt obedience, but his was only an appearance. If we want to find the pattern of a perfect obedience we must take the answer of the second son, and the action of the eldest. When we know God's will we must do it at once.

One great motive for so doing is that very often, when an opportunity is offered us by God of serving Him and fulfilling His will, if it be not seized at once, it slips from us and is never again to be had. Half the successes of life are due to quickness in perceiving what is to be done, and readiness to seize the right moment. That is how great fortunes are made. We say of such and such a man that he is amazingly lucky; he has made some notable hits. But the element in him which has led him to success is promptness. He has seized the right moment to do the right thing. I remember a man in

comfortable circumstances telling me one day the secret of his success. He had been a common sailor. On his first voyage, he had touched at the Mauritius and gone on thence to India. His vessel returned to the Mauritius, and he brought back with him from India a barrel of leeches. He had heard, quite casually, when in the Mauritius, that there were no leeches there. This had been said before him and the rest of the crew, but he alone had taken note of the fact, and when he brought a keg of leeches back he sold them at almost any price he liked to ask. "That," said he, "was my first start. My success is entirely due to my having always watched to see where I could put down my foot, and always having put down my foot where I saw I could plant it."

Now in spiritual things it is quite as true as in material things, that promptness is the first element of success. You must keep your eyes open to see what God's will is, and when there is an opportunity of doing it, and then at once, without hesitation, you must do that which has to be done.

The impotent man in the sheep market never got healed during thirty and eight years that he lay by the Pool of Bethesda, because, as he said, "while I am coming, another steppeth down into the water before me." And it is much the same with a host of well meaning Christians, they never attain to perfect health of soul, for when they are making up their minds to do that which is necessary for their salvation, the opportunities pass away.

11. Perfection.—When I say that obedience to the will of God must be perfect, I mean that it must not be wanting in thoroughness, it must be no half-and-half obedience. “No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

When our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us, He did His work thoroughly. We are made up of soul and body. He did not redeem us in part. He redeemed us altogether; He has become the Saviour of the entire man, of soul and of body. In obedience to the will of the Father, He took human flesh on Him, and lived among men, and taught men the truth; but that was not all. He completed the good work, He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So in the fulfilment of our duties, we must not half do them, but strive to do them perfectly. You know how it is with some persons—if you ask them to do a thing for you, they do it, but do it in so unsatisfactory a fashion, that you regret not having done it yourself; it is done in a way—it appears to be done, but is done in such a bad way, that it might just as well not have been done at all. It is the same with their duties to God, they are done superficially, there is no thoroughness whatever in them. David says, “praise the Lord with the harp: sing praises unto Him with the lute, and instrument of ten strings.” Now you know very well that in every instru-

ment of pipes or strings, all the pipes or strings must be sound and in tune, or the music played on the instrument is spoiled. If one note on the organ cypher, the result is distressing to the ear. Every pipe, every string, every note, must be in tune, full strung and sound, or the instrument is better left unplayed ; there is no pleasure in listening to it. So with our duties. It does not satisfy God or men, if we have some in tune and let others become relaxed. We must do all our duties as well as we can, we must try to serve God in every particular. And now you can understand the words of S. James, ‘ Who-soever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.’ We must strive to do God’s will in every particular, not in some only.

III. Perseverance.—The last quality of obedience is perseverance in well doing. Ezekiel says, “When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live ? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned : in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.” Consequently, it is not enough to begin to serve God with promptness, nor to do what He commanded well, if this obedience is lacking in perseverance. “He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” We serve God with zeal for a while, and then give up, for our hearts grow cold. We resist the devil for a while, and then give

way, tired of the struggle. We are careful of our conduct for a time, and then neglectful, tired of constant vigilance.

Joash, the king of Israel, went to visit Elisha the prophet. Now Israel was sorely afflicted by the incursions of the Syrians, so that the land had no rest. "And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it : and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria." (2 Kings xiii. 15-17.) The arrow sped through the air, and stuck quivering in the ground. Then the king put another arrow on the string, and shot again, and away flew the arrow, and smote into the ground, near the first. Once again he shot, and then he thought he had had enough of this sort of play, and he unstrung his bow, and put it in a corner, to lean against the wall, and returned the rest of the arrows to his quiver, which he hung up on a nail, and rubbed his hands together, and sat down. Elisha looked hard at him, and kept silence, but the king was satisfied ; he had shot away three good arrows, and that was enough. So he began to talk about other matters.

Then Elisha's anger was kindled, and he exclaimed, "What is this that thou hast done? Did I not say to thee, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and the arrow

of deliverance from Syria ? Why, then, didst thou not go on shooting, till thou hadst expended all thine arrows ? Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times ; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it : whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."

We may learn a lesson from this—a lesson of perseverance. As the prophet put his hands on the hands of the king, and assisted him in shooting, so does God put His hands, as it were, on our hands, assisting our weakness in our resistance to our spiritual foes ; and He would have us go on discharging spiritual weapons against spiritual foes, unflaggingly ; He would not have us faint and be weary of well doing, but smite again and again in the fight against Satan and every kind of temptation : fight as long as life lasts, fight as long as we have ammunition, fight as long as He is ready to help us, fight till we have routed, and utterly consumed our enemies.

But this is not what we are inclined to do. We strive against sin for a while, and then give over. We are content if we win in one or two battles, if we resist once or twice. This, however, is not sufficient ; if we will serve God, and keep His will, if we will be victorious in the great contest of life, we must be prompt in our service, perfect in our obedience, and persevere unto the end.

THANKSGIVING.

(*Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.*)

S. LUKE XVII. 17.

"Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

IN the gospel for to-day we have an example of gratitude which we must strive to follow, and also an example of shameful ingratitude, which we must shun.

Ten lepers were healed of their disease by the power of Christ. They were healed whilst on their way to the priests, as He had bidden them go. One only returned to cast himself at the feet of Him who had recovered him of his leprosy, and give Him thanks for the mercy shown him. The other ten went on their way, glad to find their flesh resume its healthy appearance, with their backs turned to the Great Physician, and without a token of thankfulness. "There were not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."

Out of ten men to whom a signal favour is shown, nine take it as a matter of course; only one recognises the extraordinary blessing, and is filled with gratitude towards

his Healer ; and this man is a Samaritan. The others ought to have known better,—they did know better,—but they did not act upon what they knew.

I would have you observe the tone of disappointment in which our Lord speaks. He seems to expect that a general thanksgiving will be made by all the ten, and He is hurt and grieved because He receives only one man's act of gratitude. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

I hope that it will be otherwise with you. You are all receivers of God's benefits. He has shown you all infinite mercies. He has cleansed you from the leprosy of original sin, and I trust that you have received from Him pardon for subsequent transgressions. Where is your gratitude? Let us know that you are thankful.

1.—Consider that God shows His loving kindness to you without any merits of your own, of His own love and free grace He justifies you, and all He asks in return is that you shall show your gratitude and obey. God does not wait for you to exhibit your worthiness before He showers His benefits upon you. He goes beyond that. He gives at once, and freely, without your deserving.

He might have dealt with us as Saul dealt with David, when he promised him his daughter in marriage. The king said, "David, I will give you my daughter, Michal, as your wife ; but then you must first satisfy me that you are man enough to be my son-in-law. First, you must

bring me the head of Goliath the Giant ; and after that you must give me proof that with your own hand you have killed a hundred Philistines. Then, and not till then, will I be satisfied that you deserve the honour ; for, please to remember, I am King over all Israel, and you are only the youngest son of a country farmer."

God, I say, might very well have thus addressed each one of us, after He had created us, and said: "I have now endowed you with natural faculties, exercise these and show me that you deserve to be given something better, and I will promote you to greater honours. Show that you are worthy of your place in the lowest rank, and I will elevate you to the second ; act worthily there, and I will further advance you to the first. Show that you are My creature, by acknowledging Me as your Creator, and fulfilling the ends for which you were born, and I will raise you to be my servant. Act as a wise and faithful servant, and I will make you my child by adoption and grace."

If God had dealt thus with us, we could have had nothing to say against His dealing. It would have been just and reasonable. But He has not seen fit to make us purchase supernatural gifts at such a price. He has freely given them to us without our working for them, or deserving them in any way. No sooner is a child born than it is taken into the family of God, and made His child. The child is given, not only its natural faculties, but supernatural graces as well. It receives the Holy Ghost to guide it ; it is given a guardian angel to watch over it ; it

is pardoned its original sinfulness ; it is admitted into the communion of saints. And God goes on to add to the benefits He has already given.

Now, suppose God had required of us to use aright and show gratitude for natural gifts, each received in succession, before He confided to us additional faculties. Suppose that God had exacted of us acts of love and devotion before giving to us sight, hearing, speech? that He had dealt with us like the mother who requires her little one to stretch out its arms to her and kiss her, before she gives it a cake? Suppose that God had said to you,—Show Me that you are grateful for the life I have given you, and that you feel some love in your heart for Me, and then—I will give you sight. After that, suppose He had said,—look around with the eyes I have given you, and let your heart throb with thankfulness, and your soul mount up with love and longing to Me, because of all the beautiful sights I have set before you, and then—I will touch your ears and you shall hear. Then, suppose He were to open your ears, and for the first time you were to hear the sweet song of birds, and the rustle of the wind in the summer trees, and the murmur of the river, and the hum of the bees among the flowers, and that He said—now, if you love Me for the sweet sounds that I have opened your ears to hear, and you thank Me for giving you this pleasure, I will give you another—I will touch your tongue, and you shall speak.

I say—suppose God had dealt thus with us, would He

not have dealt very justly and very reasonably? But He has not done so. He has given us all our faculties at once, sight and hearing, touch and smell, and taste, and speech. They all come to us at once, and He says, *after* He has given them to us, "Well! See how I have loved you! Have you no thanks to give me? no love in your hearts for me?"

But this is not all. He has given us more than our natural faculties at our birth. He has given us supernatural faculties at our new birth—at our baptism. The little infant at the font has no more deserved the gifts of grace God then grants it than has the infant when born deserved the natural gifts of sight, hearing, touch, speech, and the like. They are freely given. So Christ uses this very open-handedness of God as an example to His disciples. When He sent forth His apostles to preach and to heal the sick and cast forth devils, He said, "Freely ye have received, freely give." That is to say—do not exact of everyone that he shall be a good man before you declare the gospel to him; do not deny baptism to any till you are sure that he is to be trusted to use and not abuse the gift of God; do not be afraid to communicate the light of the Truth to all, because all will not profit by the light to walk in His Truth; freely ye have received, without any apprenticeship being exacted of you, give freely in like manner.

II. And now let me turn to the second part of my subject. I have, in the first place, shewn you how God deals

with you ; that He gives first, and freely. Now I wish you to see how He expects thanks of you for what you have received. When Christ had healed the ten lepers, only one returned to give thanks, and our Lord was disappointed. He said, "Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?" He had answered the prayers of ten, when they cried to Him, lifting up their voices with one accord, and saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Accordingly He expects that these ten shall return, and with one accord raise their common thanksgiving for the mercy bestowed on all alike. I think that this shews us that it is pleasing to God that all who have been blessed by God, shall unite in general thanksgiving to Him. In heaven, the angels praise Him, not one by one, but in a great united song of thanksgiving. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues . . . cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen." (Rev. vii. 9-12.) What ! is then not eternity unrolled before the angels and the redeemed, in which each may singly lift his voice amidst the hush of heaven, and say, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits?" Must thousands, and tens of thou-

sands, lift their voices as thunder together, as though time were short in which to tell the wondrous works of the Lord? Even so! It is well pleasing to God thus to receive the rolling flood of praise sweeping round His throne. Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord!

When the three children were cast into the furnace of fire, then stood up Ananias and prayed, he the mouth-piece of his brethren; but when he had ceased from his prayer, then we read, "The three, as out of one mouth, praised, glorified, and blessed God, saying, Blessed art Thou, O Lord God of our fathers: and to be praised and exalted above all, for ever. And blessed is Thy glorious and holy name: and to be praised and exalted above all, for ever. Blessed art Thou in the temple of Thy holy glory: and to be praised and glorified above all, for ever." (Song of Three Children v. 2, 28-31.) One may pray for the others, but all must, with one consent, praise and magnify the Lord together. My dear brethren, this indeed is the great end of public worship; as its name implies, it is the worship of God by all. You do not come to Church chiefly to hear the Word of God read. You do not come to Church chiefly to hear sermons. You do not come to Church chiefly to pray to God. Above all you come to Church to worship God, to praise and magnify Him. If you make to yourselves any other conception of public worship, you make to yourselves a very erroneous one. We gather here together once a week to rehearse the great work of eternity, that which will engage

us for ages on ages—the worship of God. We shall not go to heaven to hear the Bible read to us. We shall not go to heaven to listen to sermons throughout eternity. God forbid! We shall not go to heaven to pray to God even. We shall go there to worship God, to praise Him, to thank Him, for His wondrous works, and His mercies shewn to all nations, to all men, and to us in particular. Eternity will not suffice to exhaust our praises.

This is why we try to make our Church services bright and musical. This is why we raise our voices in Psalm and Canticle, and Hymn. We are praising God. We are thanking God. We are worshipping God.

When Noah came forth out of the ark, he “took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” (Gen. viii. 20.) What! Would it not have sufficed had Noah taken one sheep or bullock and sacrificed that? Would not that have been sufficient proof to God of his gratitude? Why should he take of every sort of clean beast, aye, and also, of every sort of clean bird? I will tell you. God had saved all the animals and all the birds in the ark with Noah, and so Noah felt that not only he and his sons, but also all the beasts and birds, must unite in one great sacrifice of thanksgiving.

My friends, we have all been saved by grace, we are all in the ark of the Church, we have all received abundant blessings from God, and God desires that we should *all*, all unite, with one accord, and in one place, and with one

voice, praise God for all His wondrous works, for the mercies He has showered down on us, for our creation, redemption, and our sanctification. "O praise God in His holiness, praise Him in the firmament of His power, praise Him in His noble acts, praise Him according to His excellent greatness, praise Him in the sound of the trumpet, praise Him upon the lute and harp, praise Him in the cymbals and dances, praise Him upon the strings and pipe. Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord."

THE SERVICE OF GOD.

(Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW, VI. 24.

"No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

I WAS reading the other day the story of a gunner in a German fortress-city (Mainz) that was besieged by the French. He was a very able gunner, and he could send shells right in among the French troops, and even explode them in their powder magazines. Now one thing puzzled the German garrison very much. The French always got the range of the place where the German Duke in command lodged. He changed his lodging from one part of the town to the other, but, no sooner had he shifted his quarters, than a shell came whizzing through the air, and dropped either on it, or close by it. There could be no question but that the Germans had a traitor in the fortress, who betrayed to the French where the headquarters of the Duke were. But who could it be ? The famous gunner was not suspected for a long time, because he did such mischief to the French with his shot. However, at last suspicion did fall on him. This was how

it did. He always had plenty of money at his command, and when food was dear, he was ready to buy the greatest dainties at the most extravagant price. Whence—it was asked—could he get his money? His wage was known to a penny.

After that he was watched. One day, as he was about to discharge his cannon, the General stopped him, had the gun unloaded, and the shell examined. The General had changed his quarters that day. In the shell was found written information to the enemy about this change of headquarters. The Commander put back the shell into the gun, and bade the man discharge it. Half an hour later a shell from the French batteries came whizzing into the fort, and fell near the gun. It did not explode, so it was taken up and examined. In it was found a large sum of money, payment to the gunner for his treachery. So the Duke held a court-martial on the man, and he was condemned to be shot. When the French heard of his death, "Oh!" said the French General, "If I had taken the fortress I also would have had him shot; he has taken our money, and done us some good, but he has also done us all the mischief he could." So—you see, this man who tried to serve two masters, was certain of execution by one or the other.

Our Lord, in the beginning of the gospel for to-day, warns all His soldiers that He will have no traitors in the camp. Those who undertake to serve under His banner must be faithful to Him, and not open correspondence with, and take pay from the enemy.

There are two camps set over against each other; the

camp of Christ Jesus, which is the City of Jerusalem, the Church ; and the camp of Satan, the City of Babylon, the world. Each army sends forth recruiting sergeants to enrol soldiers, and each makes promises.

Christ, through His recruiting sergeants, His ministers, offers good things, eternal, hereafter, in the Heavens. Satan, through his officers, offers good things, quickly fading, present, here on earth. The former are sure and lasting, sure as God's word, lasting as God Himself. The latter are uncertain, soon passing, mingled with bitterness. Now, one would think that there would be little or no hesitation among men whom they would serve, but it is not so,—they stand uncertain between the two ; they want to serve both masters, and have the good things promised by Satan here, and those promised by Christ hereafter. They would not think of abandoning their hope of gaining the eternal joys and rewards of heaven, but have not the smallest intention of doing without all those things that the world and mammon and Satan can give them here.

You may remember how the Israelites at one time occupied a somewhat similar position. Their king was Ahab with his queen Jezebel, and Ahab and Jezebel worshipped Baal—and they advanced to places of trust only worshippers of Baal. So the Israelites tried to compromise matters, to conform to Baal outwardly, and believe in God in their hearts. Then the prophet Elijah was sent by God to them, and he thundered in their ears the question “ How long halt ye between two opinions ? If the Lord

be God follow Him ; but if Baal, then follow him." We are told further, "the people answered him not a word." How could they? They had no worthy excuse for their conduct that they could make.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ says the same thing. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." These masters require opposite services ; if you obey one you offend the other. The service of one is incompatible with allegiance to the other. The word that Christ uses to designate the opposed leader is mammon. The word really means *wealth*, that is—all the good things of this world. Christ gives this title to the spirit of opposition derived from the allurements he uses, the bribes he offers to draw men away from Him. It is an old story.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that the same snares were used in his time as are used now. He says that God had turned away His face, displeased with His people, the house of Jacob. "Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures : their land is full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." Who filled the people with good things? Who gave them the land for their inheritance? Who gave them gold and silver, and horses? God Himself had enriched His people. But listen to what follows : Isaiah goes on to say, "Their land also is full of idols." God had shewn love and mercy to His chosen people. Do they thank Him? Do they serve

Him? No! They make to themselves idols out of the gold and silver, and worship the work of their own hands. God gives good things, and the Prince of this world uses these very things as bribes to draw away the hearts of men from the Giver, so as to make them love and worship the things given. Satan does not say, "Come, love me, worship me, think of me, labour for me." He is too clever. He disguises himself, so as not to be seen, and says, "Love the good things of the world, try them, think of them, care only for them, labour for them, devote your lives to them."

Let us now see what is implied by the service of God.

We have, all of us, entered into that service, and we are all bound to our Master in heaven. We have, therefore, no right whatever to be doing that which is required of us by mammon, or, let us rather say, by Satan. S. Paul says, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey. He goes on to say that those to whom he wrote, had, in time past, been servants of sin; but that, since their baptism, they had passed into a new service, they had changed their situations. "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you," and so "being made free from sin," that is, the bondage of sin, "ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. vi. 16-18.) Very well, then, we have passed into God's service at our Baptism, and let us see what our duties are, that we may be good servants.

1. First, then, we must worship God, that is to say, we must shew Him honour, as our Master. I shall not say much

on this topic now ; but I would have you remember that just as an earthly master expects his servants to appear before him, and salute him, so does your heavenly Master expect all His servants to appear before Him, in His house, at least once a week, and there to worship Him. Mind you, this is a duty. Sunday was not appointed merely as a day on which to rest from labour. Rest from labour was not the end, but the means to the end. God requires the Sunday to be observed by rest from labour, *in order* that His servants may be able to appear before Him in His house, and there shew Him homage, and give Him praise.

2. In the second place, we must believe in God ; that is to say, that we must accept, and hold, without doubting, all these things which God has revealed to us as necessary for salvation. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "He that cometh to God," says the Apostle, "must believe that He is," not only so, but he must believe in those truths which He has taught men. Remember what we undertook at our Baptism, that is, when we entered the service of God. We then pledged ourselves to hold through life all those verities which are contained in the Apostles' Creed. That Creed contains in the smallest possible space the sum of revelation made by God to the world. It is not sufficient for us to keep the Commandments, we must also believe the Truth. There are two duties equally imposed on us, and equally accepted.

3. Lastly, then, we must keep God's commandments ; that is, we must do His will. And, "this is the will of God," says S. Paul, "even your sanctification." Think of this !

God's will is that we should make ourselves fitting to dwell with Him eternally. Suppose a wealthy nobleman were to take a poor beggar child, and say to it, "I will take you into my house, and clothe and feed you, and treat you as my own son; but, first of all, you must be washed and made tidy, and you must have a little schooling, so as to be able to speak and act as a gentleman." Do you not suppose the child would be eager to acquire what was asked of him, and to get rid of dirty and unseemly tricks? I think it would. Now this is what God asks of us. He says, You shall live for ever with Me in heaven, only, first I expect you to acquire the habits and likings suitable for the place and the society in which you will be when taken to heaven. That is what our earthly schooling is. That is what our service on earth consists of. We are here, learning so to conduct ourselves as to be fit to be citizens of heaven; and, on the other side is Satan striving to draw us away, just as an old gipsy might endeavour to persuade the child I have spoken of, to abandon its upward path, and take to the old disorderly life to which it was born.

Now, my brethren, whom will you serve? Will you strive to obey the heavenly Master, and fit yourselves for heaven? Or will you turn to the service of Satan, who will draw you with him into darkness and death? Do not think to serve both, that is not possible. No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

THE FEAR OF GOD.

(Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE VII. 16.

"And there came a fear on all."

WHEN Don Ramiro came to the throne of Spain, he found the kingdom in sad disorder. The sovereign power of the throne was disregarded, the laws were disobeyed. The great lords acted as was right in their own eyes, oppressing the poor, fighting with one another, so that there was neither justice, nor peace, nor order in the realm. The king in vain issued proclamations; no one attended to his orders. Then he summoned a great gathering of all the principal men of his kingdom, and when they were assembled, he stood forth, and said, "My authority is not in force, my voice is not listened to; so I am determined to have a peal of bells hung up here, near my palace and capital city, which shall be heard throughout my kingdom, and which shall proclaim everywhere that I will be obeyed."

Then the great nobles laughed, and one whispered to another, "We knew the king was weak, now we know he

is a fool." And another rose up and said, "If your majesty were to cast the bells out of all the metal dug out of the mines in Spain, they could not be heard through the entire realm."

The king answered quietly, "The chime shall ring to-morrow morning, and the sound will fly into the remotest corner of the kingdom."

Next morning, the heads of all the most disorderly and disobedient of his vassals were dangling on tall gallows, and those whose heads had not been cut off, hurried home as fast as they could, bearing the news throughout Spain that the chime of the bells was, "King Ramiro will be obeyed," and after that, perfect order and obedience prevailed. If any noble showed signs of turbulence, his friends said to him, "Take care, King Ramiro may take a fancy to add another bell to his chime."

We are told by David that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cxi. 10); and Solomon says the same thing twice over, in the same words. In the first chapter of Proverbs, he says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," and in the ninth chapter, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Moreover, Job says, that God Himself revealed this truth to men, "Unto man, He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom: and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job xxviii. 28.)

You see what stress is laid on the Fear of God; it is spoken of as the root of a good life, of an understanding

heart, and a wise walk through life. I might multiply quotations from Holy Scripture on the importance of Fear, but I will not do so. I leave you to look them out for yourselves. But you will see that I have some good reason for speaking to you to-day on such a subject.

In an earthly kingdom there are laws imposed, and officers appointed to enforce the observance of these laws. If the laws be broken, then the transgressors are taken into custody and are punished.

We belong to two kingdoms, one that is earthly, and one that is Heavenly. The earthly kingdom to which we belong is the kingdom of Great Britain, and the Heavenly kingdom to which we belong is the Catholic Church. We are bound to obey the laws in the earthly kingdom, and we are bound to obey the laws in the Heavenly kingdom. But there is this difference to be found between the two systems. In the earthly kingdom, if a man breaks the laws he is punished. Only in very small transgressions does he escape with a reprimand. In the Heavenly kingdom it is otherwise. Our Heavenly king is Jesus Christ, and His officers in the kingdom are bishops, priests and deacons. He does not punish in His kingdom, at once, a transgressor of His laws, nor does He authorise His ministers to use severity, and inflict chastisement for breaking His laws. He reserves punishment to a future time : He will come Himself as judge, and He will take account of every man, and punish him for the wrong he has done, *then* ; but not till then. The reason of this is,

that, unlike an earthly ruler, He leaves an opening for repentance. In an earthly kingdom, the magistrate or judge does not let off a criminal because he protests his regret and promises not to transgress again. But in the Heavenly kingdom, Christ does allow the whole of life as a time for repentance and obtaining pardon for past sin. He says, "I have established laws, and they who break My laws shall suffer for it ; but I do not desire the suffering of any man. I therefore allow to each a space of time in which he may repent ; that is, I must be satisfied that he is really sorry for what he has done, and really anxious not to break My laws again." God is just, but He is also merciful. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. That which is aimed at by the earthly power is the protection of the innocent. That which is aimed at by the Heavenly Ruler is the reformation and restoration of the sinner. Now the punishments inflicted by the rulers of this world certainly succeed in deterring a great many from committing murder, and robbery, and other crimes, through fear of the consequences, for they who are tempted to kill, or steal, know that the law is very severe, and very strict, and will punish them with certainty, if they be caught. But the punishment rarely improves the person punished. It is not often that a man comes out of prison a better man than he went in.

The way in which Christ deals with men in His kingdom is altogether different. It has not the same end in view.

He delays punishment. He bears long, and waits patiently, in hopes that he who has broken His law may become sorry for what he has done, and turn and repent, and amend his ways.

Now, it so happens, that this very forbearance on the part of God acts in many cases in quite a different way from that intended by God. Men, seeing that He does not punish iniquity openly, and at once, think that He is not to be feared, that He is easy-going, ready to overlook everything done wrong, and that no anxiety need be felt about a future judgment. The pagan Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, issued a law, forbidding the speaking of a future judgment, because, he said, it alarmed men's minds. Satan does not prevent the speaking of a future judgment, but he destroys the fear of it, so that men may talk about it, and hear about it, and be quite easy in their minds. He does this in a very crafty and clever way. He persuades men that God is so merciful, and so ready to forgive, that they have only to profess belief in Christ's name, and all inconvenience that sin might occasion them, all qualms of conscience, all fear of future retribution that may arise, are taken away from them.

In the thirty-sixth Psalm, David lets us know that it is this absence of fear of God and His judgements, which lies at the bottom of the evil that is found in the world. "My heart," he says, "sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly : that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own sight, until his

abominable sin be found out. The words of his mouth are unrighteous, and full of deceit: he hath left off to behave himself wisely, and to do good. He imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way: neither doth he abhor anything that is evil." But, why? What is it that makes him flatter himself, that is, excuse himself? What is it that takes the fear of God from before his eyes? David goes on to tell us. "Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens, Thy righteousness standeth like the strong mountains." The ungodly man leans on God's mercy. He thinks that God's goodness is so great, that it towers up, up into the clouds, and is so firm, that it cannot be moved, it is solid as the strong mountains. But then he forgets something else which David adds, "Thy judgments are like the great deep."

It is true that God is good, but it is also true that He is just. God is not merciful in order to encourage a man to sin, but in order that he may recover himself from sin. His mercy and His justice balance each other. If the mountain towers high into the air, the deep sinks to an abyss beneath. The earth thrown out of a ditch is forced into a mound, which rises into the air, and as it rises the ditch deepens, and the earth thrown out is the equivalent to the space excavated. So in the world, the dry land and the mountains stand up above the sea level, but the sea bottom goes down deep beneath. So in the world of God's dealings, His justice is profound and His mercy

exalted, but neither is in excess of the other. The one balances the other.

Try always to bear in mind that God is just, and that, if He is merciful, He shews His mercy to enable the sinner to shake himself free from his sin, and amend his life, never in order to enable him to go on in his sins with an easy conscience.

It is not only the notorious sinners who must fear God ; David calls on the saints to do so as well, that is, all those who are striving to serve God. "Fear the Lord, all ye His saints;" and S. Paul gives us the reason, "Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. iv. 1.) We can only be saved by persevering in the grace of God, and in the way of His commandments ; and surrounded as we are by temptations, it is well for us ever to know our own weakness, and to walk in the fear of God, lest we should fall away.

I have told you that God does not punish transgressions in this life ; that is, He does not execute judgment here, but He does sometimes give us warnings that He is just as well as merciful. He does sometimes also bring swift retribution on the ungodly, but only when their grace time is expired. Sometimes He wounds us to rouse us to a sense that sin is not to be trifled with, but must be expiated by suffering ; and this has sometimes the desired result,—it brings us to repentance. Sometimes He lets us see, by the severe punishments which He inflicts

on nations or individuals, that He will not endure the contradiction of sinners for ever, that there is a limit to His endurance. Sometimes we ourselves are struck down, and feel the consequences of what we have done, and see that though we have salved our consciences, we must nevertheless suffer for our transgressions. Sometimes we are afflicted with bad years, crops fail, the weather at harvest time is unpropitious, disease breaks out among our sheep and cattle. Sometimes terrible accidents occur, sometimes awful cataclysms of nature, as the earthquake in Ischia, and the volcanic convulsions in Java, this summer, destroying thousands of our fellow creatures. Now these are all the pealing of God's chime, the sounding of a warning to be heard through the length and breadth of the land, that God is King, and will be obeyed. When such warnings come to us, then God is appealing to us to fear Him. He may suffer long and be kind, but obeyed He will be by His subjects, and if no exhortation avail, He will make examples, so as to rouse them by fear to a sense of their duty. "Let all the earth fear the Lord," says David. "Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him." (Ps. xxxiii. 8.) And in another Psalm, he gives in a nutshell the kernel of Christian obedience. "Stand in awe of Him, and sin not." (Ps. iv. 4.) That is, "Fear the Lord, and in that fear you have the surest preventive against a fall." So comes it to pass that He can say with confidence elsewhere, "Surely His salvation is nigh unto them that *fear* Him."

HUMILITY.

(Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE XIV. 9.

"Give this man place."

IN the Gospel for to-day our Lord speaks of a quality which is essential for the Christian Life ; He gives the parable of those invited to a Wedding Feast, to enforce the necessity of Humility. "He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms," that is, places at the tables. What he said may be paraphrased thus, "When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down at the head of the table in the place of honour, lest a more honourable man than thou be invited ; and when the host brings him to his place, he finds you have seized on his chair, whereupon he says to thee, Give this man place ; and then thou hast to rise up, and leave the chair, and take another farther down the table. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down at the bottom of the table, and then when the host comes, he will say, Friend ! how camest thou here ? and he makes you come up along

with him, and take a place of honour. Then all those who are seated at table whisper together, and notice how honoured and beloved thou art. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased ; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

You must not suppose that our Lord spoke this merely concerning places at table. He spoke this parable as a general exhortation to humility, that all those who are His disciples should learn to be lowly in their own eyes, and to esteem others better than themselves.

An old saint said that "Humility was the threshold of Holiness," and indeed, we shall never do anything good, and make any way in the following of Christ, unless we begin with humility. Our Lord, indeed, set us the example ; for He made Himself of no reputation, and took on Him the form of a servant, when He came into the world. "Learn of Me," He said, "for I am meek and lowly of heart."

I am not going to speak to you to-day of Pride, as ordinarily observed, and as we ordinarily meet it ; but of Spiritual Pride, which is a subtle evil which must be specially guarded against by all those who are striving to lead a godly life. A man may be proud of his position, proud of his wealth, proud of his strength, proud of his cleverness, proud of his skill ; this sort of pride is easily observed, and if it be excessive, it is sinful, and is offensive, but Spiritual Pride is perhaps less observable, and its growth less watched against. There are two

conditions which are particularly subject to the attacks of Spiritual Pride.

I. When a religious-minded person enjoys great spiritual privileges and favours, is a frequent communicant, obtains sensible pleasure from prayer and meditation, is aware of real zeal for God, and love of God in the heart ; then the devil tempts to Spiritual Pride.

II. When some person has been a sinner, and has turned and repented, and has been, in a word—converted, then, he is tempted to give way to Spiritual Pride. Instead of becoming humble, he thinks in himself, I must have something worth preserving, or God would not have troubled Himself to bring me out of my error into truth, out of my sins into a new life.

We will consider both these cases.

I. When anyone is living to God, with the thought of God before him, when he is careful about his prayers, and finds delight in prayer, and in meditation, and in reading of divine things, then it not infrequently happens that there steals over him, imperceptibly, a sense of security, a feeling that he is all right and quite safe, that he can no longer fall into sin, that he is an elect vessel of God, made to be honoured. He compares himself with others, and sees how much more pious he is than others, how much more regular he is than others in his devotions, how much deeper insight he has into sacred verities than others, how much more spiritual experience he has had than others ; then he becomes elated, and like the Pharisee

in another parable, he looks down on the many poor publicans around him, and thanks God he is not such as they. He sets himself far above them.

Remember that Satan was once an angel, nay more, an archangel in heaven, but he was filled with Spiritual Pride, thinking himself superior to St. Michael and St. Gabriel, as one who ought to stand on the step of the throne of God, nearest to Him. This spiritual pride caused his fall, and now he who was an angel is a devil, and his place is not in heaven but in hell.

It was the same sin that caused the ruin and dispersion of the Jews. They knew that God had chosen them from among all the nations of the earth ; had given them special privileges ; had revealed to them the truth that other peoples had desired to know, but had been unable to acquire, and they were puffed up with spiritual pride, they thought that God had chosen them for their excellence, not out of His free grace, and they despised the Gentiles instead of pitying them. They were so blinded by their self-importance, that when our Lord came among them to teach them the way of God more fully, they would not receive Him, they cast Him forth and slew Him.

In the lives of the Saints, we read a story of a certain Chancellor of the Emperor of the East, called Theodulus, who had served his master and his country faithfully, for many years ; and at last, suddenly roused to the care of his soul, he thought he could no longer hold his office and live to God. So he went before the Emperor, and

resigned his Chancellorship. Then he returned home, and there because he was rich and noble, he was much disturbed with many visitors, and with the calls of his station. Moreover, his wife and children were a cause of anxiety to him, and drew him from the consideration of God and his soul. Accordingly, he left his home and family, and went away into the desert, where he could live in solitude, thinking undisturbed of God, praying and fasting, and labouring for the cleansing and sanctification of his soul.

Now after the lapse of forty-eight years, Theodulus thought in his own mind that he must have become quite saintly and beloved of God, and must have merited a glorious place in Heaven. Therefore he prayed to God to reveal to him his place in the courts of Paradise. That night he had a dream, and in his dream he saw Heaven opened, and the golden thrones of the saints set on the right hand and on the left of Christ, and lo! on one throne was written a name, "Cornelius, the piper, of Edessa," and at the foot of the throne was a stool, and on the stool was graven his own name. Then the old man ran into the city of Edessa to find Cornelius, at whose feet he should sit in Christ's kingdom. After a while he found him in the market-place, piping to a crowd of children and women. Thereupon Theodulus caught him by the sleeve, and drew him aside, and said to him, "Tell me! how hast thou served God so well, as to deserve a glorious place in Heaven, and that I, even I, should find

no other place than the stool at thy feet?" "I have done nothing good," answered the piper, humbly.

"Thou hast done something nevertheless. A man will not be exalted to the kingdom of heaven, and given a seat among the just, unless he has deserved it."

"I never did but one good thing in my life that I can think of," said the piper.

"But, tell me, what was it?" asked the old hermit.

Then the man, reddening, said, "Some time ago, there was a virtuous young wife in this town, who had only been married two years, when her husband fell into difficulties, and was cast into the debtor's prison; and the poor thing was constrained to beg for food and money to keep him and herself alive. She was very fair, and she feared lest she should attract rude eyes, was withal as modest as a young maiden; and when she begged, she held out both her hands, and hung her head, and only murmured inarticulate words. So I saw her one day; and I was grieved, for I had piped and danced in the court of her house for a few coppers not many months before. Then I went to her and asked her how much her husband owed, and she said, 'Four hundred pieces of silver.' Then I ran home, and turned out my money-box, and found therein two hundred and thirty pieces; then I took a pair of gold bracelets and a chain, that had belonged to my dear dead wife, and they were worth seventy pieces of silver; but that was not enough. So then I got together some of my silk dresses, in which I

appear at the theatre, when I have to play there, and I rolled them all up, and took them to the woman, with the money, and I said, 'There, take all, and release your husband from jail.' Then I ran away. I believe this is the only good thing I have ever done."

Then the old man was abashed, for he saw how that God could best be served by man remaining where God had placed him, and doing what good he can as the opportunities present themselves before him.

II. Now let us turn to the second cause of Spiritual Pride. That, as I have said, is a sin that frequently attacks those who have been converted from a bad life to one of religious zeal. They think there must be something in them that has made God choose them out, and manifest His power in them. Instead of being humbled by the thought of the past, they are proud, they even boast of it, and they go so far as to despise those who are leading good and honest lives, and who have never been reprobates like themselves. It really seems amazing, when we think that this can be, and yet, seriously, it is the case, by no means as seldom as you might suppose.

Very likely the devil sees that there is no chance of his inveigling them again into his power in the old way, with the old temptations. They are on their guard against falling into sins and under evil habits from which they have, with an effort freed themselves. So he goes about his work in a new and unsuspected way. He tries to persuade them what mighty fine fellows they are, and

how far superior they are to those who have never fallen, because God has manifested His power in them in a way that was unnecessary for the others. Then they begin to boast themselves, and to hold up their heads, and become inflated with spiritual self-conceit. They are the elect of God, and the rest are nothing.

Now it happens that we have in scripture, from God's own mouth, a very full and clear account of what a good conversion means.

The Jewish people had fallen away, and they were, by a miracle of God's grace, converted. They saw their error and sin, and returned to God. Then God said to them, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments and do them." I pray you mark exactly what God says. He is declaring what are the results of a true conversion. He gives pardon for the past. That is what is meant by, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness." He gives full forgiveness and restoration to favor. He gives a new tender heart, full of love for Him, and for all that is good. He takes away the hard, selfish heart, which is without compassion for others. He puts a new spirit into man, inspiring him with new aims, hopes,

interests. Next, the converted man strives to keep the statutes and commandments of God, which before he had despised and broken. So far, so good. Now listen to what follows: God goes on, Himself, to declare what is also found in the truly converted. He says—listen to every word—they are the words of God—“Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall *lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.*” (Ezekiel xxxvi. 25-7, 31.)

There ! you see the result of a true conversion, shame, humble, burning shame ; nothing that approaches to boasting and self-esteem. “Ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight.” For your neglect of God during so many of the best years of life, “ye shall lothe yourselves.” For the sins, which have stained your innocence, committed again and again, “ye shall lothe yourselves.” For your forgetfulness of the duties God has imposed on you, and which you, at your Baptism, had undertaken to fulfil, “ye shall lothe yourselves.” For your want of love for God, a merciful and tender Father, who, in spite of your transgressions, still loved you, and called you to repentance, “ye shall lothe yourselves.” For your disregard of the blood of Jesus Christ, of His Cross, of His pierced hands and side, pleading for you, offering to cleanse and restore you, “ye shall lothe yourselves.” For the many times that you have stifled the voice of conscience, and done despite to the Holy Spirit, who had

deigned to make a temple of your heart, "ye shall lothe yourselves."

O, dear brethren, when God calls to repentance and amendment of life, He calls also to humility; and very surely, where the devil can destroy a soul by no other means, he will effect his purpose, by introducing into the heart, the seed of spiritual pride. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

THE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE OF GOD.

(Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATT. XXII. 37, 38.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

LOUIS XI., king of France, made a grand public entry into his city of Tournay. Then the mayor and aldermen, and the Bishops and Clergy, the city guilds and burgesses, came forth outside the gates to receive him, led by a beautiful maiden, who was dressed in the colours of the city arms, with a crown round her head to represent walls, and the name, "Tournay," written in gold on her breast. She was intended as an allegorical figure representing the town itself. She advanced to the king, bowed, and held up to him a gold heart. The king received it, and observing a spring like that of a locket, touched the spring, and the heart flew open, and inside was a little scroll, on which were written just three Latin words, * which meant, "Thus the people love the king." King Louis at once pressed the golden heart to his own heart, and replied, "Thus also the king loves the people." †

* Sic Populus Regem.

† Sic quoque Populum Rex.

You understand, I dare say, what this meant. The town of Tournay by this beautiful little scene designed to show King Louis that love of him filled the hearts of his people. And the king by his reply meant that, in like manner, the love of his people filled his own heart.

Now, our Lord tells us that God commands and expects of His people, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." The reason is, because He has first loved us. S. John says, "He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." (1 John iv. 8-10.)

In the story that I have told you, the first manifestation of love was from the people to their king, and when he had received token of their love, then he told them that as they loved him so did he love them. But in the case of God and man the situation is exactly reversed, God manifests to men His great love for them, and expects, in return, that they shall love Him. Moreover, our Lord shows us, in His answer to the Lawyer, that just as God's heart is full of love to us (remember, S. John says, "God is Love"), so must our hearts be full of love to God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." One might think that it would be impossible to express more fully and more strongly how much love God expects of

us, and yet when a scribe asked of Christ which was the first commandment of all, He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." (S Mark xii. 30.)

You may perhaps think that this is a strange command. You do not command a child to love its father and mother, you take it as a matter of course that it will do so; and you look at the child who does not as a little monster. Moreover, you would suppose that it was impossible to make love spring up obedient to a command. A man does this or that when ordered, but he cannot feel this or that. How then is it that God gives such a command as this? I will explain this to you as well as I can.

A child naturally loves its parents because it sees them everyday, it receives its food and clothing at their hands, from them it receives all it has, and it knows this. But God, our Heavenly Father, we do not see with our bodily eyes, we see Him only by Faith. We *believe* that God is our Father. We *believe* that He has created us, and endowed us with all our faculties of mind and body. We *believe* that He watches over us, and protects us. So you see we cannot begin to love Him till we *believe* in Him. We must have Faith before we have Love. So this command which Christ gives, is addressed to those who live the life of Faith, to those whose eyes have been opened to the knowledge of God. The Apostle says that

“He that cometh to God, must believe that He is,” and so precisely is it true that no man can possibly love God, till he believes that He is his Father, and Creator, and Lord.

Please to notice what followed, directly after our Lord had given to the Lawyer the answer contained in my text. The Gospel goes on to say, “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?” I may paraphrase what our Lord said to make the connection more clear to your minds. He said to the Lawyer, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Does this seem strange to thee? No, it is not strange to him who believes. You must believe in Me, and then you will love Me. But to believe in Me, you must know who I am, whence I came, what I am come into the world for, what My nature is. I ask you therefore, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? I ask you this, for, unless you think rightly on these points, you will not believe on Me, and unless you believe on Me, you will not love Me, and no man cometh to the Father but by Me.”

Now do you see the connexion in what our Lord was saying? He was urging the Pharisees and His own disciples to seek and find out what He was, and what His mission was: “He that seeketh findeth;” then there would be a chance of their believing; “Faith cometh by hearing.” When they believed, then His claims on their

love would appear so great, so overwhelming, that they would find love awake in their hearts, and become a strong passion.

So you see that love comes of believing, and believing comes of learning about God and Christ ; and you see that there is a close connexion between the question addressed by Christ, " What think ye of Christ ? " and the command, " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

Love will come naturally, if you think aright of Christ and God ; and unless you think aright, you will not love God as He expects.

Now, therefore, we come to the second part of my sermon. I ask you, " What think ye of Christ ? " That is to say, I want to know whether you have got a right faith ; for on that depends your love of God.

You must not suppose that it is a small matter what your faith is. On the contrary, it is of the greatest importance that you should have a firm and right belief. Without that you may have great admiration for Christ, as a prophet, but you will have no personal love for Him ; and it is through Him that we approach, know, and love the Father. This is what is meant by the words of the Athanasian Creed, " It is necessary to everlasting salvation, that a man believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ." After that, this Creed goes on to lay down the exact truth, " The right faith is, that we believe and

confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man."

This, accordingly, is the great foundation truth, which we must hold if we are to love God as He expects. When, indeed, we realise what this truth is, how much it involves, we can hardly fail to love God. The reason why we have so little of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, is that we do not think of Christ and of God, we have Him not in all our thoughts, we think of everything else except God.

Well, then, let us try to obtain a more exact knowledge of God, and of His Son, Jesus Christ, of what has been done for us, of how our salvation has been bought. If we will only *think* of these things, then from thinking we shall go on to loving.

In the Faroe Isles, the natives have fourteen different names for as many different kinds of fogs, as the islands are enveloped in vapour very frequently. I am not sure, that with respect to the twelve articles of the Christian Faith, contained in the Apostles' Creed, they are, to many of you, only so many varieties of fog. You have a vague misty notion about them as being right and true, no doubt, but you do not clearly understand them, and you do not think of them as realities. Now the articles of the Christian Faith are sharp, clear, and well defined, and we ought to think of them and see them as such. We do not do so, either because we have not been instructed, or because we have not listened to, and

taken to heart, the instructions we have received.

I remember an old Professor of Music, at Cambridge, who had played the organ and taught the choirs at two of the colleges for between thirty and forty years. One Easter Day, the anthem he had set was, "God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of a trumpet." The Dean of the college sent for him after service, and asked him why he had set an Ascension Day anthem for Easter. "Well," he answered, "I knew that both festivals had something to do with going up, but I never was able to make out the difference between them."

Very evident it was, that the Professor saw the articles, "The third day He rose again from the dead," and "He ascended into heaven," as two sorts of fogs. He did not know the difference, because he had not given a thought to them, though he had played the organ at divine worship for between thirty and forty years—twice each day, that is, once at each of the two chapels.

A man cannot be forced to think, but till he thinks he cannot know, and till he knows he will not love.

Now, my dear brethren, you see from the words of Christ that God does expect that His sons shall love Him, and love Him with heart, and soul, and mind. You see also that no love can grow without knowledge. You must think of Christ before you can love Him. Now God can not make you love Him; and when He tells you that He demands your love, this is involved in the

command,—“You must think of Me, and think of Me aright, then from thinking you will come to loving.” If we will not give Him our thoughts, we shall in heart be far from Him. Try, therefore, to think more of Him, to be more anxious to know the truth about Him; and then I do believe that your hearts will warm towards Him. In the whole of scripture we may see into the heart of God, and see therein His love for men. The record of God’s dealings with His old people, and especially the Holy Gospels, are the opening to us of the heart of God, and we see there how the King of heaven and earth loves His people. Can we not answer : So Thy people love their King ? I fear not. I see little tokens of love anywhere. What is the reason of this coldness ? Is it because they do not think of God ? They have Him not in their thoughts, therefore they have Him not in their hearts.

BREAKING THE ROOF.

(Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.)

GEN. VI. 16.

"A window shalt thou make to the ark."

IN the Gospel for to-day we have the narrative of the healing of the paralytic. Christ was in a house, and so great was the throng of persons who were gathered to hear Him and see Him, some really desirous of receiving His teaching, others listening only that they might pick occasion against Him, that some men who were carrying a paralytic could not get in at the door. They therefore ascended to the flat roof of the house, and took off the covering, so as to make an opening sufficient for their purpose, and through the hole they had thus made they let down the sick man by ropes to the feet of Jesus.

Can you not imagine the scene? In the little hall of the house was a dense crowd, and the small window was full of heads of men and boys peering in. The door was fast wedged with human beings. The room was close, and hot, and dark, accordingly. Then, all at once, Jesus and those who pressed on Him heard a noise

overhead of the tiles being removed. A moment after, the blue sky above was visible, and the golden sun sent a ray down into the dusky hall, and a cool sea air relieved the closeness of the chamber. Those who were about Jesus drew back. They were afraid of the tiles falling on their heads, or they were puzzled at what they saw above, some large body descending through the gap in the roof. So, having made a little space, the sick man was let down, and rested at the feet of the Saviour.

The great object of our life must be to attain to our Lord Jesus Christ. With Him is healing, enlightenment, the Truth, the Light, the Life. Cut off from Him we are in error, in darkness, and in death. The Blind obtained sight from His touch ; the deaf, hearing ; the dumb, speech ; the sick, restoration to health ; the dead obtained renewed life. It is so still. With Him is all spiritual healing, strength, illumination. If we would be strong spiritually, if we would see spiritually, if we would hear spiritually, we must draw near to and touch our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Fountain whence flows all Spiritual life, and power, and health.

Now, as there were hindrances to the approach to Christ then, when the palsied man needed health, so are there hindrances now to the approach to Christ.

The hindrances then were two-fold. They are two-fold now.

The two hindrances then, were the crowd, and the walls and roof. The hindrances now are from men who

prevent our approach ; and from domestic, that is, home affairs. If we will attain to Christ, and obtain from Him what we need, we must make a way through one or other.

The way in which we touch Christ now is through the Sacrament. There are very few communicants to be found among professing Christians now. How is this? It is either because of the crowd, or because of home. Either they fear what men will say ; or because they are engrossed in home duties and cares. The roof that covers them shuts out heaven from them, or their daily associates making up their world, block the way to Christ. Ask yourselves why you are not communicants. Ask yourselves, why you, who so need the touch of Christ, do not go to Him. Are not these the reasons? Do you not say either this,—What will folks say, if they see me become a communicant? Will they not begin to tease me, and to watch me, and expect of me a more consistent religious walk? Or, I am really too busy with what must be done. I have so many family cares, my time is so taken up with duties that I cannot give up the time and thought to becoming a communicant. Am I not right? Does not the crowd keep you away from Christ, or, if not the crowd, the home roof?

Now what I am going to speak to you about to-day is the breaking up of the roof. I am not going to say anything about elbowing your way through the crowd. That is, I am not going to speak about defying the opinions and chatter of your fellows ; but I am going to speak of

the necessity of looking beyond the home roof, of breaking a hole in it, through which you can look up to God and Heaven, and receive the glorious light and breath, the breath of the Spirit.

It is very true that you have your home duties set you by God. You wives have got the cooking, and washing, and mending for your husbands and children. You have the cradles to rock, and stockings to darn, and the floors to scrub, and the potatoes to peel. Well, well, well! of course you must do this. God expects you to do this. It is your duty to do this. But then, don't occupy your minds *only* with the cradle, and the stockings, and the floors, and the potatoes. Have a hole in the roof of your house. Look up! look up to God! Think of Heaven. Set your affections on things above. Let your heart be there. Your spiritual nature will be smothered if there be no opening for it. Never allow your minds to be *engrossed* by the cares and duties of the things of earth. Always keep an opening towards Heaven through which you can look up to God's throne.

You know what happens with a flower if it be covered over so that it cannot see the light. It damps off and dies. So is it with our souls. If we do not keep an opening for them Heavenward, they will droop and die.

Are you aware that it is necessary for fish to come to the surface of the water now and then? You know that they can live in water, and that they have got a very ingenious contrivance in their gills, by which they can

extract the air out of the water to feed their lungs. Nevertheless, that is not sufficient for them. After a few minutes—sometimes after a long while under water, up they come to the light and air for a little instant, and then down they go again into the deeps. You may take a lesson from the fish. They teach you not to be content with living in the natural element in which your bodies move. You should rise above it now and then, not for long, only for a moment or two, may be, but still rise, into the spiritual realm, and there look to God, and take in a breath of spiritual life.

I knew a good servant girl once who used to pray to God while scrubbing the floor. Well! can not you rise in prayer, in thought to God, while at your worldly avocations? I am sure you might. Then your souls would not be so overcharged with cares and business as they now are.

When Noah was building his ark, God gave him a command, "A window shalt thou make to the ark;" and this window was not to be made in the sides, but at the top, in the roof. What was this window for? Of course, to let in the light and air. But that was not the only reason. The other reason was, that Noah might look out at it, sometimes, to heaven. It was in the roof. He could not see through it the waves, and the carcasses, and the wrecks floating on the water. He could not see the gradual disappearance of the face of the earth, and the engulfing of the mountains. He could see nothing of earth through it—only heaven.

I have no doubt whatever that he had a hard time of it in the ark. There were the beasts demanding their food, the lions roaring, the asses braying, the bears growling, the eagles screaming, the oxen bellowing. A terrible din, and an incessant drudgery looking after all these animals.

Sometimes he was dead beat with the work, and then he crawled up aloft, and cast himself down on the boards, and just looked up through the window. This would not last for ever. God was above. He reigneth over the water flood. He would give rest at the last. So Noah was strengthened in heart to go on with his work. Then the sons murmured. One would not do this, it was not his place. Japhet was the eldest, and he wanted to put off some of the more disagreeable duties on Ham, but Ham was an ill-conditioned fellow, and wanted to do nothing at all. Then the four women quarrelled. He had little comfort from his own family, and, but for that window, the look up to God through it, he would have despaired.

Forty days of rain! Sometimes Noah must have felt inclined to doubt. Think of the rain coming down in heavy waterspouts, day after day, night after night, with, seemingly, no end to it. He would have doubted had it not been for that window. When his heart began to fail, then he went to it, and held up his face to the light, and through the opening he saw the drifting clouds; and, ah! a little patch of blue sky, and a sudden gleam of golden sun. No, no! God was above. He walketh upon the wings of the wind. He will not desert His

elect. He made a covenant with Noah that He would save him, and He will not fail.

So you see, my dear friends, what a great comfort this window in the ark was to Noah. If it had been in the side of the ark instead of the roof it would have been no comfort at all, it would have shown him only the drowning world, the dying men, the wrecked ships, the sinking mountains. But, because it was in the roof, he saw only heaven through it, and so he received through it comfort. Through it he held commune with God.

Now we have got a voyage over the water-flood also. We have to pass through many storms and troubles. We have our difficulties within and without. Our perils from outside, and our distresses within. These will swallow us up. They will engross our souls. We shall be smothered under them, unless we systematically keep a window in the roof open, and go to it, to look through it to God.

We may have hard and harrassing work, as Noah had with the beasts, and they will wear us out unless we act like him, and now and then take refuge with God in prayer and meditation. We may have family vexations and trials, and they will embitter us, unless we seek for guidance and light from God. We may be discouraged, and disposed to doubt and despair, unless we fly to God for increase of faith.

When Daniel was in the land of captivity, he opened his window seven times a day towards Jerusalem, and

prayed to God through it. Our Jerusalem is above,—the heavenly Jerusalem, and we must, like him, turn our faces thither, and pray.

My brethren, I have no more to say to you to-day. The one lesson I have been trying to impress on you, is the necessity, if you would keep the spiritual life in you alive, to break through the roof of worldly cares and business, and now and then to rise from thoughts of earth to commune with God. We, like Noah, have a voyage to make, and shall, in that voyage, be tossed on many troubles,—in the midst of our cares, in our hours of deepest distress, let us always keep open a window towards heaven.

SERIOUSNESS.

(Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XXII. 5.

"They made light of it."

IN the Gospel for to-day we have the Parable of the king who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call his principal subjects to the wedding. They, however, refused to attend. Then he sent forth other servants to urge those whom he had invited to attend. "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; come unto the marriage." But the men when they received this second message, "made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them."

You will observe that there were men of two sorts who refused the invitation; those who were indifferent, and those who were actively hostile and rebellious. The former shrugged their shoulders and walked away, and forgot about the invitation, or thought they had shaken

off their responsibility to attend by sending an apology and an excuse. "They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." The other men maltreated the messengers of the king. "They took his servants . . . and slew them."

There is apparently a great deal of difference in guilt in these two classes of men; nevertheless, both are involved in a common destruction. The Parable goes on, "When the king heard thereof, he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city."

Now, just as this Parable shews us two classes of men who refuse the invitation of the king, and who are punished for refusing, so do we find two classes of men now in the world,—nay, not only so, but in the very kingdom of God, in His Church, who will finally have their position with the unbelievers in the outer darkness, where will be weeping over lost opportunities, weeping over carelessness and indifference, and the gnashing of teeth of those who have resisted the truth and the light, and have acquired a hatred of God.

There are, alas, tares as well as wheat, not only in the world, but in the field of Christ's Church; there are those who resist God and the light, and there are those who are simply indifferent and thoughtless.

I am not going to speak to you of those who are actively hostile and rebellious, but of those who are

careless and wanting in appreciation of the seriousness of the situation in which they are placed.

Mind you ! we, the ministers of God come to you, sent by God, to bear you messages from God. We teach you the Truth as revealed by Jesus Christ to His Church, to be handed on and taught with authority by His ministers unto the end of time. Do you listen ? Do you learn ? Does not what you are taught go in at one ear and out at the other ? In Lent I spoke to you about a truth most necessary for all to know—the nature of true repentance ; of the three parts that make it up. How much of that do you remember ? Can you tell me now what the three parts are that go to make up true Repentance ?

Again, the ministers of God come to you, and expect you to be in earnest about your salvation, to draw nigh to the altar of God, and partake of that Bread which came down from Heaven, of which whosoever eateth shall live for ever ; without which there is no spiritual life in you. How many take to heart these exhortations ? How many think over the Lord's own solemn words spoken in S. John's Gospel, 8th chapter, and act upon them and accept the invitation ? Is it not with you as with the men in the Parable, "*They made light of it, and went their ways ?*"

They made light of it ! of the truth of God ! of the things necessary to eternal salvation ! of the opportunities offered them of nourishing the hidden divine life within ! of the very Saviour Himself pleading with them, and holding out to them His Sacred Blood !

Nor is this all. God expects of us, not only to care for our eternal welfare and the salvation of our souls, but also to work for His glory here and to advance His kingdom.

When the Canaanites assailed the people of the Lord in the time of the Judges, the summons was sent to all the Israelites to arm and fight for their God and nation. There was a little place called Meroz on the southern slopes of the hill of Bashan. The men there thought they were too few and too insignificant to be of much use; they had their farms and their merchandise, and so, they paid no attention to the messengers who summoned them to war. "They made light of it."

A great battle took place, and the Canaanites were utterly defeated. So the land was delivered from bondage, and the men of Meroz, no doubt, were very glad to hear that they were free, and that they had been freed at no cost to themselves; and they said to themselves, "No one will now think of us, we will make merry with the rest, and brag of what we did, and the number of Canaanites we killed, and nobody will be the wiser." But those men of Meroz were out of their reckoning. No sooner was peace restored, than the word of the Lord came to Deborah the prophetess, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." (Judges v. 23.) The eye of God had been on them, and for their indifference and neglect His curse fell on them. Never

again does the name of Meroz occur in Holy Scripture, and its site is only marked by a heap of ruined stones.

And, my brethren, God expects of us active aid in the great strife of the Church against the world, of true religion against the spiritual wickedness that is in high places. We are sent into the world with a double mission : to work for the glory of God in the first place, and for the salvation of our souls in the second. We must fight for God, we must go to the help of the Lord against the mighty of this world and of hell, who strive to subdue the Church of God, and bring His children into slavery—to worldliness. When the messengers of God call to you to be zealous, to strive for the faith once for all delivered to the Church, to make an effort to advance Christ's kingdom, by assisting, with your alms, missionary endeavours, by doing all you can to make the service of God beautiful, and His house glorious, how is it that you "make light of it?" Is the glory of God nothing to you? the kingdom of God nothing?

I will tell you how it is that so many make light of the messages brought to them by the ministers of God. It is because they do not realise the importance of these messages. Why is this? S. Paul answers, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." (2 Cor. iv. 4.) That is the reason,—the devil, here called the god of this world, has blinded the minds of men, so that they do not see the importance of the truths brought before them.

Every man should have an eye to his present interest, and an eye to his future welfare. The god of this world is ready enough to let him look well after his interests here, in this world, but he blinds his eye to his future welfare, so that not seeing he makes light of it, and goes his way to look after the things that he does see, the things that concern his present life. In the 1st Book of Samuel, we read that Nahash, king of the Ammonites, came to the city of Jabesh-Gilead, and camped round it, and threatened it with destruction. Now the men of Jabesh saw that they were in a great strait, they had not power to resist the army of the Ammonites, nor was their city victualled to stand a long siege, so they sent out messengers to king Nahash, saying, "Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee." You see they made an offer of free surrender, and a promise to become the subjects of the king of Ammon. What sort of answer do you suppose Nahash made to them? You would think that he would readily have accepted their surrender; but no. Nahash, the Ammonite, answered them, "On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes." (1 Sam. xi. 2.) Strange indeed! He would rule over these people of Jabesh as a ferocious tyrant, not as a kindly king. He would have subjects blind of one eye, not in their full faculties.

Well, now, my brethren, Satan deals with us just as Nahash dealt with the men of Jabesh; and what is wonderful is, there are plenty of men who make a covenant

with him on his own terms. Remember what S. Paul says of those men who make light of the messages of the ministers of God. He says, "The god of this world hath blinded their eyes." That is, like Nahash, he has put out one of each man's eyes, and that is the right eye, the eye that looks to eternal welfare, and he leaves the left eye, that looks to temporal concerns, untouched. Nahash means the serpent, and is indeed a type of that old serpent, the devil, who fights against God, who is also the prince of this world,—and the world is at enmity with God.

My dear brethren, can you feel sure that your eye—the eye that should look to things eternal, is not blinded by the God of this world? I can not. I wish I could; but till I meet with more earnestness in the work of salvation, more zeal for the glory of God and His kingdom, more desire to quicken the spiritual life by sacramental participation of the Bread of Life, more hunger and thirst after righteousness, I cannot believe it. I fear that too many have made a covenant with Nahash, and have let him, the god of this world, thrust out the right eye, the eye that looks to the things eternal that fade not away.

Was it not a serious matter that the men in the parable refused the king's invitation? What could have induced them to do so? Was not the king's favour of the utmost importance to them? Had he not prepared for them the best banquet in his power to provide? It was so—and they were blinded to their proper interests. One man thought of a field-gate that must be shut, another of his

barley which was lying out, another of buying a stock of cheap goods, and so on. Each looked to something of the present moment, being blind of an eye, blind, that is, to the future, to what would be the consequences after to-day if he refused his king's invitation. Because he was thus blind to his future well-being, and saw only his present necessities, he made light of the message.

Be very careful, my brethren, not to let the god of this world blind your eye. You can always tell how your sight stands with both eyes. If you see very clearly your present interests, your left eye is right enough, but if you make light of the things that concern your future welfare, the truth of God, the divine light, the sacramental food of the soul, the kingdom of God, the glory of God—then, be very sure, unconsciously you are slipping into covenant with the god of this world, and he is blinding your eye to that which is all important.

MEDIATION.

(Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.)

EPHESIANS VI. 10.

“ My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

THERE is no blessing so great and highly appreciated as health and strength. The poor man sound in body is happier than the rich man with broken constitution. With health life can be enjoyed, everything comes to one with zest,—work, pleasure, rest, food ; without health life is without joy. Work is impossible. Nothing pleases. Rest is desired but not attained. Food is unpalatable. How glad we are to be strong and well ! How depressed we are when sickness comes on us ! And so we come to value health as the most priceless of all good things. We desire it above everything else. We value it more than we value anything beside.

This is the case with bodily health. Is it the same with our spiritual health ? Are we equally anxious to maintain that ? Do we dread the decline of our spiritual powers as we dread the failure of our bodily powers ? I do not think so.

Why is this? Because we concern ourselves far more for the life that perishes than for the life that lasts. The Apostle Paul in my text, which is from the Epistle for this day, urges you to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," that is, He expects you to be careful of your spiritual strength and health which is given to you, and which is maintained by God.

I am going to speak to you to-day on the source of our spiritual life and strength, and to show you how it comes to us, and how it continues to be supplied to us.

In order that I may do so, I shall have to explain to you one of those truths which lie at the very foundation of our Christian Belief, one of the foundation stones of the whole spiritual fabric.

I am going to speak to you about Mediation.

We talk of Christ as our Mediator, of our trust in His Mediation; but do you attach any definite ideas to these words? I do not think you do, and till you do understand them, you are hardly likely to make much progress in the spiritual life, to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

A Mediator means one who goes between; that is, one who acts as a means of communication between those who are separated by space, or circumstances, or nature.

I will give you a few simple illustrations to make you understand what Mediation means.

I am in London, and you are here. I telegraph a message to you. The wires act as mediator, conveying to you that which I desire to say to you, and which I cannot say to you by word of mouth because separated from you by two hundred miles.

In Plymouth there was no good water at one time. On Dartmoor are abundant springs of the purest water. Now Sir Francis Drake cut a conduit, or, as we call it here, a leat, to lead the pure crystal water from Dartmoor into the town of Plymouth. Well, that leat is the mediator conveying the water from the springs out on the wild uninhabited moor to the mouths of the thirsty hundreds and thousands in Plymouth.

Again, the people in London want butter; well, you do not take the butter up to London, and they do not come down here to fetch it. No, there are middle-men or regraters, who buy your butter in the Tavistock market, and send it up to London, and give you the money of the Londoners. These middle-men are the mediators, standing between those who supply and those who consume. And in like manner all shopkeepers are mediators, middle-men between the manufacturer and the purchaser.

So far I have spoken to you only about those who are separated by space and circumstances. Now let us go a step farther and speak about those who are separated by nature, and let me show you how in this case also mediation comes in.

Now I come to separation by nature. Life is a gift of God. It issues from God alone. No man can create life. We have, each one of us, in us, life, the breath of God. How does it come to us? Did God mould us of the dust of the earth, like Adam, and then breathe into our nostrils the breath of life, so that each of us woke up a living soul? By no means, we received our life mediately. It was communicated to us by God through our father and mother. They were the mediators of life to us, standing between us and God, receiving the life from God and passing it on to us.

I will show you this more fully in another way. You have life, but that life must be sustained continually. Have you given a serious thought to the mystery of life and the marvel of its sustentation? I dare say not, so now I will explain it to you. You have life in you, but that life must be kept up continually, by adding to it, continuously, fresh supplies. If you do not add these supplies the life in you goes out, just as a fire goes out when not kept supplied with fuel. Where do you get these additional supplies of life? From the bread you eat. In your food is life. Just as there is in everything active heat and latent heat, so there is in every living creature of God active life and latent life. The active life is killed in the corn when ground and baked, but the latent life remains, and when we eat, we do not merely supply the waste in the substance of our bodies, but the waste also in our life-supply. Thus we are continually

taking into us, from all we eat and drink, fresh supplies of life to keep up the flame of life in us, which would certainly expire unless thus constantly replenished.

Now God is the sole source of life wherever it is found, and when we take in life through the bread we eat, we are receiving it of God, but mediately, through the bread. Here we have three several natures. God Who is a Spirit, man who is material and spiritual, and the bread which is material only. And it is very remarkable that God has thus used the bare material object as the mediator between Him and us. But so it is, and the grass to the cattle, the red berries to the birds, the dead earth to the plants, are mediators conveying life from God to them.

What stands between God and the herb of the field, and touching God receives from Him the force which the roots receive and utilise in tissue, and stalk, and leaf, and flower? Surely, the earth,—the common bare mould.

God is light, the sole source of light. How do we get light? From the sun, moon, and stars. Whence do they receive it? From God. They are our mediators, standing between God and the dark world, and communicating to it the light they have received from God. But even that is not direct. The moon, as you know, receives her light from the sun, and then mediates it to us. The twinkling stars are suns, very, very far off. Do you know why they twinkle? Between us and them is an atmosphere, very finely attenuated, and this atmosphere

transmits to us the light in waves. Without that atmosphere the light could not travel. It is the mediator, conveying the light from the stars to our eyes. So you see the whole world of nature is one of mediation. Is it wonderful that the same law should hold good in the world of grace? Is it wonderful that as God gives us life and light through mediating vehicles, so He should give us grace through a mediator ?

You have no doubt heard how desirous scientific men have been to find the missing link between men and the beasts ; and there was, this year, or last, quite an excitement caused by the report of the discovery of a race of tailed men. Here, it was exclaimed, we have found the missing link at last ! Now, who can deny it that we are animals, standing only a foot above these tailed men, as these tailed men stand a foot above the apes ? I believe that the reason why some people are so eager to find the missing link between themselves and the beasts, is that they may be able to excuse their yielding to their bestial appetites, by saying that they are only following their natural instincts.

Whilst some are hunting after the missing link that unites them to the beasts, the Church points out to us the missing link that unites us to God. That missing link is Jesus Christ. He is our mediator,—that is, the middle Man between those who want, and Him who supplies. He touches God through His divine nature, and man through His human nature. Those who seek the missing

link below man, do so to excuse themselves for sinking to the level of beasts, by the indulgence of their fleshly appetites ; but the missing link is given us by God *above*, not below, in order that we may be elevated, ennobled, spiritualised. If there ever was a tailed man, a missing link below, he has been cut away, to leave us with no excuse for going downwards to the beasts. We must go up, up, up to God, through the missing link, the Mediator, the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

This is the doctrine of the Incarnation,—this, the foundation of the Catholic Faith, which it is necessary to everlasting salvation that we should believe. All life is initiated (or begun) and sustained. It is initiated mediately, through our parents ; it is sustained, mediately, through our daily bread. So all spiritual life is begun and continued. It is begun mediately, it is sustained mediately. The initiator of our spiritual life is Jesus Christ, Who, standing between God and man, transmits to man the spark of the divine life. It is sustained, mediately, by Jesus Christ, Who gives to us the grace sufficient for us,—that is, the continuous supplies of fresh spiritual life.

In the Christian Church, God acts on precisely the same principle as in the created world. Every good and perfect gift that cometh down from the Father of Lights, comes to us through mediators—in the natural world, the mediators of initiated life are our parents, the medium of our sustained life is our daily bread. In the spiritual

world it is just the same. Nothing comes to us without mediators. There is, and must be, a vehicle for the conveyance of life and of grace. Christ is our mediator. He gives the life begun, and He supports the life that exists. But, I ask again, how does He do this? By the same law. He acts on us mediately. As He is God and Man, spiritual and material, He touches God through His divine nature, and man through His created nature.

Now, perhaps, you see how wonderfully the system of the Church is formed on the same lines as the system of the created world. The sacraments were ordained by God, as the means whereby men should touch Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ touch them. In Baptism, Christ touches the child, and communicates to it the new life derived from God; and in Holy Communion, Christ touches the devout recipient, and gives to him a sustentation of the spiritual life.

Now, also, you can understand our Lord's words to Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That is, just as a man must receive natural life mediately from God, or he cannot enter into the kingdom of living beings, so a man must receive spiritual life, mediately, in the way I have appointed, or he cannot enter into the kingdom of spiritual beings.

You will understand further our Lord's words, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." That is,

Christ sustains the spiritual life, sacramentally, according to the same principle whereby the natural life is sustained.

“Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” is S. Paul’s exhortation in to-day’s Epistle. How are we to be spiritually strong? How to be spiritually sound? Surely, through God, Who strengthens us, Who healeth all our infirmities. But that strength and health come to us through Christ, He is the mediator between God and man, the middle Man, touching both; through Him we have access to the Father. Through Him comes grace to us; through Him alone is it possible for us to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

THE REASON OF GOD'S PUNISHMENTS.

(Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XVIII. 25.

"Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made."

THE parable in the Gospel for to-day shows us God as just and as merciful. The lord is merciful to the man who owed him ten thousand talents, that is, £1,800,000, because the man showed signs of sincere repentance. He confessed his sin, he exhibited the marks of sorrow, and he promised amendment. The lord in the parable pardons the man; pardons him however conditionally; that is, the servant is forgiven his debt on the understanding that his repentance is sincere.

But, as it turns out, his repentance was not sincere. He showed outward tokens of sorrow, but his heart was hard as ever. No sooner was the man gone forth from the Lord's presence than he fell upon a fellow servant who owed him an hundred pence, and he cast him into prison because he had not the money wherewithal to pay him at once his little debt.

When the Lord heard this he was wroth, and he sent for the hard-hearted man, and withdrew his promise of forgiveness. "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me ; shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormenters, till he should pay all that was due unto him."

We see in this parable, as I have said already, both the mercy and the justice of God. He is merciful to those who truly repent ; but He is also just, and He will not be put off with a mock repentance, with a profession of repentance without the tokens of a sincere repentance being manifest in the life.

I am going to speak to you to-day about God's chastisements.

He punishes man, I. as a Father ; and II. as a Judge.

We often receive things from God which are opposed to what we desire for ourselves ; sometimes He afflicts our bodies, sometimes He denies us that on which our hearts are set ; sometimes He takes from us that thing or those persons on whom our love is concentrated ; sometimes we lose our money through a bad speculation. There are many ways in which we may be afflicted, and it is well for us to recognise God as the writer of these hard things against us, as He Whose hand is laid heavily on our heads, and to submit with an acknowledgment that His

dealings are right, that He is afflicting us for a purpose, either as a Father in love, or in chastisement as a Judge.

Job was a man well-to-do and with a large family. One day when he was sitting at home expecting no evil, he saw a man running towards him. He was surprised and curious to know what could bring him in such haste. Presently the man came up, and Job recognised him as one of his servants who had care of his cattle. The man was unable at first to speak, he was so out of breath, and Job saw from the expression of his face that he brought evil tidings. At last the man gasped forth, "Sir ! I and the rest of the cowherds were with your oxen at pasture, and we were about to drive the cows home to be milked, when all at once there rushed down on us a party of Arabs, who threw their spears at us, and killed my fellow-servants, only I escaped by running away, and when I reached a hill top, and looked back, I saw the Arabs driving away all those beautiful milch cows, and the calves and bullocks, and fat stock ; you have not one left ; all, all are gone."

That was the end of Job's dairy. "Well ! he said, "This is heavy tidings. However, I am not left penniless, I have still many hundreds of sheep, which are ready to be shorn, and I shall be able to dispose of their wool." He was cut short by another man, who came up, looking white and frightened. "Oh ! sir," he said, "I have terrible news to tell you. There has been a frightful thunderstorm on the mountains, where the sheep were

feeding, and the lightning struck the flock, and not a sheep is left, all are lying black and scorched on the ground, and the sheep stalls and fold are set on fire, and were blazing when I came away. Never was such an awful storm seen by any man living." Job maintained his composure. The loss was terrible to him. His dairy and stock had failed him, and now his wool harvest was at an end. However, he had something else to look to. He had camels, and these useful animals he employed in the carrying trade between Canaan and Egypt. They were sent down in a caravan with the goods of Canaan into Egypt, and returned laden with the precious commodities of the Nile valley. Whilst he was thinking of this, another servant came up, panting, and so wearied that he could hardly stand. "Sir!" he said, "I have to announce to you a dreadful disaster. The Chaldeans attacked the caravan, killed all who were with it, and have driven off all the camels with their lading into the mountain fastnesses, where no one can pursue them."

Now Job had lost everything. In one day, from being a wealthy man he had fallen to poverty. Did he murmur against God for thus dealing with him? No!—He said in his own heart, "Well, never mind, I have my darling children still, whom I have watched grow up about me. How I love them all! How good God has been to give them to me, and to make them so precious to me! I am an old man now, and they will be the glory of my grey hairs. By the way. To-day is my eldest son's birthday.

How well I remember the day, some five and twenty years ago, when he was born, how proud I was of the little babe, and how his mother smiled and pressed my hand, when I stood by her, and held up my little son before her eyes." His thoughts were cut short by another man, who came running up. Job was afraid to ask him his tidings. His heart misgave him ; but he held out his hand, and with the other covered his eyes. Then the man said, "Your children were all together in their eldest brother's house making merry, as it was his birthday; but there came on a frightful storm, and the wind tore the house down, and rafters and stones crashed down on them, and all—all—sons and daughters, eldest and youngest—all are dead." Then Job was silent awhile, and when he had sufficiently recovered himself to speak, he raised his trembling hands, and his weeping eyes to heaven, and said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord."

See how noble, how good was Job's heart! He never for a moment charged God wrongfully. He never for a moment forgot that God was his Father, that what he received came from the hand of God, and came as the chastisement of a father.

God indeed deals with us, not out of cruelty, as wishing to make us suffer, but out of tenderness, as desiring our perfection. When He sees us setting our hearts too

much on something here, He removes from us that which is injuring our best prospects. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." The best part of us is the imperishable soul, and when God sees that the soul is being strangled by over much care and love for the things of the body, He beats down the weeds that choke the soul, to give it light and air. Our true life is the eternal life hereafter. When God sees that all our concern is for the life here, and that no thought is given to the time that will be, then He blights our hopes here, He disappoints our ambitions, frustrates our aims, so that we may turn our thoughts to the other world, where are no disappointments.

When an old Persian noble had done that which was wrong, it was customary for the king to hold judgment upon him, and to order that he should be punished by his bow being broken, or his best suit of clothes being hung up and beaten to rags, or by some choice picture of his to be torn, or by his favourite horse being shot. The person of the noble was sacred, he was not himself imprisoned, or maimed, or beheaded. So God deals with us,—as a Father. The precious soul is sacred, He never touches that, but He takes from us, or destroys before our eyes, the things that are valued and are dear to us, and He does this in order to bring us to proper obedience, to a sense of the transitoriness of things here, and to stimulate us to live for our best part—our souls, and for our true aim—heavenly life.

Now see how truly Job felt this. He knew that God dealt with him as was best for him; and all he said, when deprived of every consolation that he had on earth, was, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord." He sets you the example of a filial spirit under affliction. No resentment is felt against God, no murmuring at God's providence, no repining for what is past, no hugging of his grief and fretting over his ruined prospects, no despair as to the future. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord."

There was another named in Holy Scripture who was also sorely afflicted by God,—that was David. Job was a blameless man, and his only fault was that he loved his children and his possessions too much. David was a man who had fallen into great sin, he had sinned against light, and God punished him, both as a father to bring him to penitence, and as a judge to manifest His justice before the people. David lost his dear little child, born to him of Bathsheba. He fasted and wept whilst the child was sick, but when the child died, then he rose and was comforted. "I opened not my mouth," he said, "for it was Thy doing." He was driven from his capital by a rebellious son, his son Absalom, whom he loved best of all his children. Absalom reigned in Jerusalem on his throne, whilst David was eating the bread of affliction in the wilderness beyond Jordan. But David did not murmur. He showed no bitterness of spirit, no resentment against

God. "I opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing." The man Shimei, who had been an obsequious servant in the day of the king's prosperity, turned against him when he fled before his enemies, cursed him, and threw dirt and stones at him. Was David filled with anger, and did he meet railing with railing? No!—he saw that this was God's chastisement for his sins. "I opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing."

And now, in conclusion, let me urge on you to look on all your afflictions, losses, privations, as sent you from God, either in fatherly love, or in just punishment. Look always for a reason why He should afflict you. There is one to be found, and if you ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you will be led to discover it. You will find either that you have deserved chastisement by your faults, or that you are forgetting the things of eternity, and setting your affections too much on things of time, and that God is wounding you through them, is reminding you of your best interests.

Never repine. Always lift your heart to God, and say, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord—I will not open my mouth in complaint, for it is Thy doing."

DUTIES OWED TO GOD.

(Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.)

S. MATTHEW XXII. 21.

“Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.”

MAN is placed in such a position that he owes duties to many. His position is complex. He is a creature of God, and therefore owes Him duties, the duties a creature owes to a creator. He is a member of the great human social body, and therefore mankind, or humanity, has its claims on him. He is one in a family, and all the members of that family demand something of him. The relations are complicated and more full than that. He is a member of a Church, and the Church expects of him a good deal. The Church is Christ’s kingdom here on earth, and as he is one of the subjects therein he owes Christ more than a mere creature owes to a creator. Then also he is a member of some kingdom, and he owes allegiance to his sovereign, obedience to the laws, and love to his country. Then, again, he is made up of body, soul, and mind, and the body must allow something to

the soul and mind, and so must the mind make demands on body and soul, and the soul also has its claims which must not be ignored.

Thus you see that every man is involved, so to speak, in a net of duties. There is no escape from them. No sooner is he brought into contact with any man or body of men, than at once obligations spring into existence, as well as rights. The rights of a man over others are the obligations others owe to him.

Not so only ; but also is it the same with things with which man is put in connection. He becomes responsible for them. If he has a garden, then that garden must be dug, weeded, and planted. If a farm, it must be stocked and tilled. If he has a house, it must be kept in repair. If he have animals, they must be fed and watered. Even the little flower in the pot in the window expects something of him. He has taken it into his house, and from that moment the little geranium, or balsam, or whatever it be, makes its demands on his time and attention. He must water it every day, and re-pot it every year.

It would seem that man's position is a difficult one to understand, but it really is not so. A natural conscience is given him which serves as his guide through the labyrinth. Difficult as it may appear, when he begins to act on conscience all is simple and self-evident.

No, not all. All the duties in the state and to one's fellow men seem simple and self-evident, but the duties

to God are not so clear. They do not force themselves on his notice like the others. The reason of this is that the duties in state and society, if neglected, are at once enforced by penalties. A man cannot break a law of his country without being punished, and he cannot neglect what he owes to his fellows without suffering for it. So also, with regard to other things. He cannot neglect his farm or his garden, or his cattle, without being made to feel loss by his neglect. If he does not weed, and till, and plant his garden, it will produce weeds instead of vegetables. If he does not dress his farm he will reap but a poor harvest. If he does not care for his horses, sheep, and cattle, they will die.

When, however, we come to the duties man owes to God, it is not the same. Neglect of them is not met with chastisement at once. A man may never worship God all his life and yet lead a comfortable existence, and realize a fortune. He may never observe Sunday, and be none the worse in health for it. Thus it is, that the conscience does not speak out and warn man against neglect of the duties owed to God, in the same way as it speaks out and warns man against neglect of the duties he owes to man.

More, then, is the necessity for you to be exhorted to observe the first table of the commandments than the second. Men will look after themselves, and make you observe the second table. God is forbearing, and He does not punish you if you neglect the first. Yet,

remember, the duties owed to God come first of all. They are the most important. The duties to man come after.

What then are the duties owed to God ?

I cannot answer better than with the summary given in the Catechism. " My duty towards God is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength ; to worship Him, to give Him thanks, to put my whole trust in Him, to call upon Him, to honour His Holy Name and His Word, and to serve Him truly all the days of my life."

When you consider what God is, and what He has done for you, then your plain understanding tells you that He has a right to expect of you worship, love, reverence, and service. The reason why so much less compunction is felt in depriving God of His proper share in our attention is solely that He does not use compulsion to maintain His rights over us.

In the xxvth chapter of the First Book of Samuel we get a fair illustration of the temper of mind which men get into when they do not fear God.

There was a man called Nabal in mount Carmel, where he had great possessions, three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats ; he had, moreover, a young, beautiful, and sensible wife, named Abigail.

David was at the time driven from the face and favour of Saul, and was in the wilderness, at the head of several

hundred armed men, near Carmel. David never allowed his men to take any of Nabal's sheep. On the contrary he protected them from robbers. When shearing time came, David went to Nabal to salute him in a friendly manner, and ask him to give him some food for his men who were hungry. "Thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. Now thy shepherds that were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

Now Nabal was a churlish fellow, and when he received this message he said rudely, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?"

This was a dangerous answer to make. David was God's anointed, destined to be king. But Nabal considered not this. David was captain over six hundred young men, well armed, surrounding his farm. But Nabal thought not of the consequences. Now when David heard this answer, he was very angry, and girded on his sword, and bade four hundred young men do the same, and follow him. However, the servants of Nabal were more prudent than he; and they went to his wife Abigail, and said to her, "David sent messengers out of

the wilderness to salute our master, and he railed on them ; but the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we anything, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now, therefore, know and consider what thou wilt do ; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household : for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him." When Abigail heard this, she hastened to meet David, and intercede with him for her husband. She did this so effectually, that David said to her, "Go up in peace to thine house ; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." And he returned with his four hundred armed men into the desert. Then Abigail hastened home to tell Nabal what she had done, but found him in such a tipsy, roystering mood, that "she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light." "And it came to pass about ten days after, that the Lord smote Nabal, that he died."

I have said that this story shows us, as in a picture, a likeness of the behaviour of many men towards God. God and His angels have been to you as a wall by night and day. He has protected you, He has given unto you security from your enemies, He has done more than David did to Nabal, for He gave you all that you have,—your bodies, souls, minds, health, faculties, worldly possessions. He gave you these, and He preserves them to you. He

sends to you His messengers, and they ask of you some of your abundance, a little,—only a little of your thoughts, a little of your time, a little reverence, a little worship; and what answer do you make? One such as Nabal made to David's servants. You will not give anything. You want all for yourself. You cannot spare your time, your substance, your thoughts. As for worship, that you do not understand how to give.

Nabal signifies, by interpretation, "a fool." A fool he was in fact as well as in name. A fool to risk the wrath of God by mocking and rejecting the man whom God had designated as king in the room of Saul. A fool to risk the wrath of David, who was well armed, and with a strong body of men at hand to revenge the insult. A fool he was, because stupidly blind to future consequences. So long as he had his wine and meat before him, and his fleeces of wool brought into the store chamber, that was enough for him. He made no provision for the future.

Are we not reminded of another fool, of whom our Lord spake?—The fool who said, "I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The lesson Christ draws from the parable is,

“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” That is to say, he is like this fool, and like Nabal who cares only for himself, his own comforts, and regards not the duties he owes to God, the giver of all good things. “Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth, where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

When our Lord spake this, He did not refer to worldly means only, and the giving of alms, but to everything we have. He took one instance—wealth, and said—Do not use all your wealth on yourself, or your money will perish with you; but use it so that you may reap the fruits hereafter. But this applies, all round, to what we have—bodily faculties, mental powers, time. Do not expend all your thoughts, all your care, all your time, on self, or, indeed on others. God puts in His claim for some, and to Him you must give what He demands. Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar’s, render unto your neighbour the neighbourly consideration they expect, render to self the necessary care, render to your family the pains and forethought needful, but, at the same time, remember to render unto God the things also that be God’s. Give to God the honour, love, and worship that He demands.

Nabal was saved for the time by the intercession of his

wife ; but in the end he was struck by God, and died. How do you know that you who are churlish in refusing God the honour due to Him, are only spared at the intercession of some wife or child ? But such intercession cannot avail for long : God may forbear awhile, but not for ever.

When He sees how little is given to Him, how little thought, how little honour, how grasping you are in keeping all to yourself, then He will say, like David, " Thou fool ! Surely, in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness of earth. I and My angels have guarded him, have been to him a wall on the right hand, and on the [left, against harm, and he hath requited me evil for good."

GRACE.

(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.)

S. LUKE VIII. 45.

"Who touched Me?"

THE Gospel for to-day contains an account of two miracles wrought by our Blessed Lord, which differ from each other in some important particulars. The miracles are, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, and the raising to life again of the daughter of Jairus.

Both miracles were wrought the same day, and on persons of the same sex, and they are connected together not merely by the time at which Christ wrought them, but also by their bearing upon each other ; for the faith of the ruler, at the moment when it was most severely tried, was strengthened by the sight of the miracle wrought upon the poor woman who had drawn near, unseen, to our Lord.

Nothing, however, can be more distinct than the circumstances of these two on whom Christ at the same time showed His mercy, the ruler of the synagogue and the poor woman. She, sordid and unclean, an outcast by the rigour of the law ; he, the depository of the law itself, rich, and in authority. She, if an early tradition

may be believed, a Gentile ; he, a Jew. The universality of our Lord's mission is shown in the mercy extended to both these. He stays on the way to the ruler's house to heal this poor woman. He makes use of her firm confidence in His power to strengthen the weak faith of the ruler of the synagogue.

Let us look a little further at the contrast between the two cases.

One was cured who had done all she could to be healed, and had failed in her endeavour ; the other had done nothing at all. One came out of her house, and thrust her way pertinaciously up to Christ through the crowd ; the other was within the house and made no effort to leave it. One went to Christ. Christ came to the other.

Now these two miracles of healing, wrought on the bodies of two women, are in character similar to the two very different ways in which God deals with human souls. The prophet Isaiah exhorts, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near." (Isai. lv. 6.) But also the prophet says, speaking for God, "I was found of them that sought Me not ; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me." (Rom. x. 20.)

S. Mary Magdalene, only by seeking, found Christ, S. Paul was found by Him when fighting against Him. So in the parables, one man fishes and finds a pearl of great price, another finds a treasure hid in a field when not looking for one. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall

not be able." But also, nothing is more certain than that He is found by some to whom He manifests Himself without any effort and desire on their part.

We see then that there are two ways in which God deals. It is His pleasure to call some} to Him of His free grace ; but it is also true that, as a general rule, God expects an effort to be made on our side before He will accept and crown with blessing.

The Prodigal Son had to arise and leave the far country, and repent, and go on his way, returning over the ground he had trodden in leaving his father's house, and to cast himself at the feet of his father, saying, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am not worthy to be called thy son." Then he was received. On the other hand, the elder brother enjoyed his father's favour and the comforts of home without, apparently, any effort to deserve them.

But, in reality, although God seems to act in such different and contradictory ways, it only seems so, and to explain to you the reason of these different ways of dealing, I must make you understand the nature of Grace.

Grace is a word we often use, but we use it without any very distinct idea of what we mean by it. We pray for Grace; we praise God for His Grace given; we believe that it is by grace that we are saved we desire to live in God's grace, and yet we do not understand what Grace is. Now grace is "that divine gift without which man cannot please God here, nor attain to happiness hereafter."

You cannot have it better defined. It is a gift of God ; and unless there be grace in a man, he is out of favour with God, and unless he lives and dies in a state of grace he cannot reach heaven.

Of Grace there are two kinds : Preventing Grace, and Assisting Grace. That is, Grace that goes before, stirs up, awakens, and places in a state of salvation, and Grace that assists and strengthens those who have been awakened and placed in a state of salvation.

Preventing Grace is freely given. So S. Paul speaks of it. God, he says, " hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace." (2 Tim. i. 9.) "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that, being justified by His Grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Tit. iii. 5-7.) S. Paul is speaking of Preventing Grace in these passages. He says, in fact, that we had done nothing to deserve God's mercy when He took us, and by the washing of regeneration translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. And what has the child done to deserve to be made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven? It has done nothing, so that what God does for it at Baptism is freely done. God gives His Preventing Grace to all who are baptized.

But not so only. He gives His Preventing Grace also to stir up and awaken those who are dead in sin, those who have lapsed into indifference, and those who are cold. Occasionally He rouses them in a striking manner, to realise the value of their souls, and their obligations to God. We call this Conversion. Saul was on his way to Damascus, to imprison and kill the Christians, when Christ struck him down, and converted him. So, sometimes, not often, He deals with souls which have fallen from grace. He quickens them to a new life when they have done nothing to deserve it. This, then, you understand, is Preventing Grace. Preventing Grace is Free Grace, Grace that goes before, and is independent of of man's effort. God's Preventing Grace is given only occasionally, and rarely. It comes like a flash of light, to bring conviction, or show the path of life,—that is all.

There is, however, another sort of Grace which man needs, and that is Assisting Grace. As Preventing Grace went before, so Assisting Grace follows after Baptism, and conversion. Preventing Grace may be likened to the lightning flash. Assisting Grace to broad sunlight. After a child has been baptised, and placed in a state in which it can work out its salvation, it needs divine help to strengthen it, to illumine it, to guide it, to sustain it. We need God's grace every day, for we are not sufficient of ourselves to do anything deserving of eternal life, as of ourselves, our sufficiency is of God. Consequently, God continues to give grace, that is, strength and help to those

who are placed in a state of salvation to keep them in that state, to enable them to resist the temptations that assail them in it, and to strengthen them to fulfil the obligations that belong to it. When S. Paul says, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," he does not mean that we are not bound to keep the law, he means that "under the law," the Jews were ordered to do God's will, but were not divinely assisted to do so. But we are "under Grace," that is, in the Church God gives us His help, and enables us perfectly to fulfil His commandments. Under the law, men had only their natural strength to carry them through, under grace we have heavenly help. That is why S. Paul also says, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."

Let us look at the journey of the children of Israel as a type of our own journey, and see how God assisted them with His Preventing and Sustaining Grace. They were under bondage to Pharaoh. Then God roused them to a great effort for freedom, and He led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea. In that He shewed His Preventing Grace, Grace that goes before.

But it was not enough that the children of Israel should be released from bondage. They had a long journey to make through the wilderness, before they could reach the Promised Land. During that journey they would need guidance, instruction, protection, support. Therefore God did not desert His people, but remained with them. He led them with the cloudy pillar, He instructed

them in His law from Mount Sinai, He stretched out His hand in protection against the enemies who assailed them, He fed them with bread from heaven, and brought water out of the stony rock to refresh and sustain them.

Thus we see that God not only went before with His grace, and delivered, but that He also followed after, and assisted those who were His people.

So does He deal with His elect still, He gives His awakening, delivering grace, that brings them out of the bondage of Satan, and puts them in the way of life, and after that, He gives His sustaining grace.

Now Preventing Grace is given freely, but Sustaining Grace must be sought. "Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." And so S. Peter exhorts us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. iii. 18.) And S. Paul exhorts Timothy, "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. ii. 1.)

We all received God's Preventing Grace when we were baptised, and we receive God's Sustaining Grace daily when we desire, seek, and ask for it. But God's Sustaining Grace is only given if we desire, seek, and ask.

It is the same with Conversion. God of His free grace, stirs up man and awakens him to his spiritual wretched-

ness and needs, without any merit or effort on his side ; but that is only the beginning, the starting on the way to the Promised Land. From the moment man begins to walk along the way that leads to it, from the moment his face is set in that direction, he must strive for the Assisting Grace of God, ask for it, use it, and advance from grace to grace.

Socrates, one of the best of men among the heathen, was a very ugly man, and moreover there was that in his face which looked as though under the surface was a boiling caldron of bad passions. Someone remarked on this to him, one day. "Yes," he answered, "by nature I am designed to be one of the worst of criminals, but reason and philosophy have enabled me to keep my vile nature under control."

Well, my brethren, we may have a nature inclined to evil, but then we are not left to philosophy to enable us to master it, and discipline it. God has given us His grace to enable us to lead holy and pure lives, whatever our natural inclinations may be.

"Almighty God, who through Thy only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life, we humbly beseech Thee, that as by Thy *special grace preventing* us, Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy *continual help* we may bring the same to good effect ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

A LIFE OF GRACE.

(*Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.*)

S. JOHN VI. 12.

"They were filled."

IN the Gospel for to-day we are given the narrative of the feeding of the five thousand with five barley loaves. And when the men had eaten, "they were filled."

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, our Lord shews us a man who has left his father's house, and gone into a far country, where he suffers from famine, and would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but no man gave to him. We may contrast the way in which the Lord feeds and satisfies those who come to Him, and the emptiness of those who serve the world. They who go to Christ are satisfied, they who seek the world are famished.

The writer of the second Book of Kings speaks of the falling away of the Israelites from the service of God. He says, that they "followed vanity and became vain." (2 Kings xvii. 15.) The prophet Jeremiah uses much the same words. He says, "Thus saith the Lord, What

iniquity have your fathers found in Me, that they are gone far from Me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" (Jer. ii. 5.) Our English translation hardly expresses the force of the original. Vanity means in each place *Emptiness*, or *Nothing*. "Following after emptiness they became empty," and "Your fathers walking after nothings have come to nothing."

God says, "See, My people, I gave you something to live for, a rule of life, and precious promises. Have you convicted Me of falsehood? Are My promises not observed? Ye have turned from Me, and have gone after utterly worthless nothings, and so have come to emptiness and nothing yourselves."

David says, "They have slept their sleep, the men whose hands were mighty have found nothing." He is speaking of worldlings. Their hands have been active in grasping all that came in their way, they have hunted after pleasure, and, after a life so spent, they lie down to sleep the sleep of death, and wake up in eternal day to find their hands empty, of all that they had laid hold of nothing remains. They have carried away nothing with them beyond the grave. The proud are, as it were, robbed by death of everything, destitute, naked, with no part or lot in life to which they wake up, following after soap bubbles—nothings all their days, they have come to nothing at last.

I am not going to deny that during life they found pleasure, and were happy and content; but I deny that what they found is lasting, and that their content is

enduring. If we will follow after nothings, they amuse us whilst we follow, but when the soap-bubbles burst, we retain nothing of what we have pursued.

If we are to obtain permanent satisfaction, if we are to wake up in everlasting day with our hands full, we must follow after something enduring, and so we shall come to something.

Now we are given an object of pursuit, and that object is everlasting Blessedness. To attain to that we must live a life of Grace, and I am going to address you to-day on the life of Grace, the walk which leads to Heaven, the way in which, following after something worth having, we may attain to it.

I have already told you in a former sermon that Grace is of two sorts: Preventing and Sustaining, and that without Preventing Grace we cannot begin, and without Sustaining Grace we cannot continue our Christian course. I will speak to you now about some of the operations of Grace; that is, what Grace does for man, what Grace will work in us, if we lead a life of Grace.

I. Grace revives a dead soul. II. Grace cleanses a polluted soul. III. Grace adorns a sinful soul.

I. In the first place, God by His Preventing Grace wakes up and gives Christian life to the soul that is dead and indifferent. Sometimes those who have been baptized fall asleep and cease to lead active Christian lives. All that was good in them is apparently dead. But it is not really

dead, it sleeps. You have been told, I dare say, that there is latent heat in everything. If you strike flint and steel together the sparks fly out. If dry wood be rubbed together it will burst into flame. The heat and fire leap out where there was no sign of it before, and so is it with baptized Christians, the Spiritual life is there, but buried and smothered. Then God calls, rouses, and the life manifests itself.

I remember hearing of an Indian drifting in his canoe down the Niagara River. He was asleep in the boat, and the boat got into the rapids above Niagara. People who saw him shouted from the shore, but cried in vain till he was in the rapids, then he started up, awake to his situation, seized the oars and plied them desperately, trying to work upstream and towards the shore. He strained every nerve in agony of terror, but in vain. The current was too strong for him ; he had woke five minutes too late. Five minutes before he would have been able to give his boat a turn which would have carried him against the bank. Those on the shore watched his frantic efforts, and saw that they were hopeless. He also at last recognised this, for he threw up his hands with a wild cry, and in a moment he and his boat were swept over the edge and disappeared in the gulf below.

Now God's voice calls to us when we are asleep and are nearing destruction. He calls and calls again ; but there is this difference between the awakening in response to His call and that of the Indian in his canoe. None

who hear and wake, hear and wake *too late*; if they do rouse themselves and strive to redeem the misspent moments past, they always can reach safety.

Sometimes, indeed, a man remains asleep till he reaches the brink of destruction, and goes over into the Bottomless Pit. Sometimes God calls, and calls in vain, but never does He call, and man respond to the call, when it is too late for him by sincere effort, assisted by grace, to save himself. When a man is given over to a reprobate mind, God ceases to warn him, his conscience no more reproaches him. He dies in his sins, unrepentant.

II. Grace cleanses the polluted soul. As God's grace arouses the sleeper, and so begins the work of reviving, so does God's grace continue the work, by cleansing. God not only rouses a man to the sense of his sin, but, if there be true repentance, then God washes away the sin. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." I have said that God pardons, and pardons fully, if there be true repentance. Without that, God will not forgive, Christ's blood will not cleanse.

When linen or wool has to be bleached, it is submitted to a substance; but that substance will not act on it unless there be some salt added. The material to be whitened will be subjected to the bleaching substance in vain till the salt is added to it. Then, at once, that substance begins to act on the wool or linen, to remove its discolourment, and render it white and pure. So, in like manner, must the brine of contrition be poured over our souls,

or the blood of Jesus Christ will be applied to them in vain.

III. Grace clothes the simple soul. God begins, continues, and perfects His work in us. He rouses the soul, pardons it all past transgressions, and adorns it with good works. All the good we do, we do with God's grace helping us. So if we are living a life of grace, we shall be clothed with righteousness. In one of our Lord's parables we are told of a man who came to a marriage supper without a wedding garment, and who was therefore cast forth into outer darkness. That wedding garment is the outward and visible token of a Christian life. It is not enough for any man to be conscious of having sinned and of being pardoned forsin, he must go on to lead a godly life, he must let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works. He must, if a good tree, of God's planting, bring forth good fruit.

The prophet Zechariah was shewn, in vision, Joshua the high priest, standing between the angel of the Lord and Satan. And the Lord said unto Satan, "The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" Now Joshua was clothed with filthy and ragged garments. Then the angel said, "Take away the filthy garments from him : behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." Then a set of new and glorious priestly robes was cast over Joshua.

This was all figurative. The high priest was the representative of the Jewish Church, and God wished to shew by this

sign that the Jewish Church and nation stood between good and evil, and that, if it would find favour with God, and dwell before Him for ever, it must lay aside its old filthy life, and walk before Him in newness and purity of life. But this applies further to all Christians. We also are set between our good angel, prompting us to serve God, and our evil angel, luring us to disobedience. If we will please God and serve Him, then we must cast off the sordid rags of our old evil habits and vicious ways, and be clothed with humility, purity, charity, and righteousness. Then says God, "If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by." (Zech. iii. 7.)

So you see what the three effects of God's grace are on the soul. Try to remember them : first, His grace rouses us to the service of God, then God's grace cleanses us from past offences, and lastly, God's grace clothes us with the garments of holiness.

And now, in conclusion, let us very briefly see what are the outward tokens that we are living a life of grace. They also are three :—

- I. Grace makes us avoid sin.
- II. Grace makes us love to do good.
- III. Grace urges us to frequent the Sacraments.

I cannot enter fully into these tokens now, but I desire you to remember them. They are the signs by which we

may know whether we are living a life of grace or not. Let us not deceive ourselves. Without these fruits the divine sap is not flowing in our veins. If we have the spirit of God in us, then we shall shrink from sin with horror; sin is hateful to God, and the sons of God will hate what He hates. S. John puts this in the strongest way, when he says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John iii. 9.) If we are of Christ, we have the mind of Christ, and He did no sin, neither was guile found in His lips. Where grace reigns, there reigns also a loathing of what is evil, and shrinking from it as from something deadly and devilish. You know how you turn away from an unpleasant smell, so he who lives a life of grace turns away with inner disgust from sin. It is offensive to him.

But it is not enough to avoid sin; a spiritual life is not negative, it is active. God not only expects that we shall avoid the evil, but that we shall also do that which is good. Jesus cursed the fig tree, not because it brought forth bad fruit, but because it produced no fruit at all. If we live a life of grace, we shall love to do God's will. So S. John says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." At the judgment, some will stand up and profess that they have not done this bad thing, and not said those bad things, and not thought other bad things. But this will not suffice. Jesus expects good acts. "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave Me

no drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in ; naked, and ye clothed Me not ; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not."

Lastly,—if we are living a life of grace, we shall frequent the sacraments. The Holy Communion is the special sacrament for the sustaining and refreshing of our souls, for keeping alive the spiritual life in us, for nourishing us to righteousness. How can we be living a life of grace if we do not love and seek renewal of grace, at the very fountain of grace ? How can we be living a life of grace if we deprive ourselves of the means of grace ? A lamp will not burn unless it be replenished with oil. Your body cannot live without its meals. So your spiritual life cannot live, and give light, cannot burn, if you abstain from approaching the Lord's Table, whence plenteous grace is dispensed to all who need.

Now then, my dear brethren, let us see by these tokens whether we are living a life of grace,—if not, then I fear, like those of whom I spoke in the beginning of my sermon, you are following after nothings, and so will, in the end, come to nothing.

MICHAELMAS.

PSALM CIV. 4.

“Who maketh His angels spirits.”

IN God's universe there are three orders of creatures : Angels which are pure spirits, beasts which have mere bodies, and men which partake of both natures, are spirits and bodies combined. Thus we touch the Angelic nature through our spirituality, as sharers with angels in a spirit which is the breath of God, and we touch the beasts through our animal nature, as sharers with them in bodies subject to decay and death.

It is this doubleness in our nature which causes us to be so liable to yield under temptation. We have to hold the balance very exactly, and not to allow the body to over-weigh the soul. We have to take care that we do not allow our lower and animal nature to obtain such a mastery over us as to crush out the life of the soul. There is a tendency in men to this, a tendency to slip down from the higher standard to the lower, to desist from every effort to mount up to the Angels, and to allow our animal inclinations to draw us down into the slough of a mere

animal existence. The Church, on the festival of SS. Michael and All Angels bids us lift up our eyes and look at the Angel host, the host of pure spirits, that is above us, so that we may be excited to aspire to be made like unto them. We have every day before us the animals to show us to what we may sink, if we live only for our lower nature.

In Sparta, it was customary for a slave to be made drunk and brought into the school, that the boys might see, and draw in disgust from the sight of the ravings and staggerings of the intoxicated wretch, and so blush ever to sink to such a level. God has placed the animals around us, that we may see what a mere animal life is, and be ashamed to live it. The poor savages exist much as do the beasts, they care only for what is from day to day, they think only of what concerns their bodies. They are a little higher than the beasts. If they have any knowledge of a future, any consciousness of possessing a soul, the knowledge is dim, and the consciousness imperfect. They are just so far lifted above the beasts that they have some idea of a life after death, some faint notions of a spiritual world about and above them. But we—we have been instructed by revelation. We know all about ourselves. We have souls, the Divine breath in us, and we have bodies. The bodies will die, the souls will live. We know that there is a God above us, that above us are also the angels, pure spirits, and that we are bound to look up, and strain upward, and not look and sink down into what is below us.

A good deal of attention has been paid of late to the condition of the London poor ; I mean the poorest of all. Some have come from the country, with country habits of cleanliness, and orderliness, and decency. They keep these up when in London for a while, and then perhaps sickness or loss of work reduces them to distress. For a while a struggle is made to keep up the old habits, but gradually the effort is relaxed, and the whole family sinks to a lower level of civilization. Perhaps work comes in then, and all goes on fairly well ; but life is at this lower level, hardly any cleanliness, orderliness or decency observed, then comes another time of privation, and the whole family sink again, and at last come to a condition of indescribable brutality—indeed, a condition in which no beast would endure to live, in which everything that centuries of civilization and religion have impressed on men is undone, and the life led in the squalid rooms and courts of London slums is vile, it is that of the most degraded savages who have never learned what is better.

Now, my brethren, the aim of our life must be to rise, to become more like to the Angels, to grow in spirituality, and to shake off more and more the exactions of the animal man. As these poor wretches in London go down, down to utter degradation, we should go up, up, unto spiritual emancipation.

S. Paul says, “ They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh ; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is

death ; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace : because the carnal mind is enmity against God." He adds, " Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 5, 7, 12, 13.) You see how S. Paul emphasizes this truth, that our nature is double, that we have a double tendency, one upward to life, the other downward to death. If we follow the upward tendency, we are following the leading of the Spirit, and it will deliver us from the bondage of the flesh ; but if we follow the downward tendency of the flesh it will extinguish the spiritual light in us, and precipitate us into death

Now let us look at the Angels, and see what their life consists in, and we shall see then in what our spirit ought to take delight, and draw in draughts of strength to master the clamorous flesh.

In the first place, the angels gaze on the face of God. It is said of the angels of little children, that "in heaven they always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven." They stand in His presence, and they see His glory. What is meant exactly by beholding the face of God, we cannot tell ; but in scripture it is used as a figure of speech for being in the immediate presence of, and enjoying the full favour of God, or of a king. Absalom was unhappy, because, for five years, he did not see his father's face. He had killed his brother, and fled to Geshur, where he abode three years, then he was allowed to return to Jerusalem,

but still was excluded for two years more from seeing his father. And he could bear it no more. So we are urged to seek the face of God. David says, "Seek the Lord and His strength : seek His face evermore." (Ps. cv. 4.) "My heart hath talked of Thee, seek ye my face : Thy face, Lord, will I seek. O hide not thou Thy face from me, nor cast Thy servant away in displeasure." (Ps. xxvii. 9, 10.) When God appeared to Solomon, He said, "If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways ; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin." (2 Chron. vii. 14.)

It would seem then, that to seek the face of God, is to strive after favour with God, and to look on the face of God, means to be in a condition of favour with Him. So S. Paul says, that hereafter, we shall see God face to face, whereas, here, we see Him as through a glass, darkly ; hereafter, that is, we shall see Him with unclouded eye, and enjoy His full favour, whereas, here, we cannot attain to that perfect favour, because of the intervening mists of transgression and error. Do you know that in looking through a telescope at the moon or the stars, one great difficulty astronomers have to contend with, is the currents of air in the atmosphere, which disturb and break the rays of light, so that they seem to be looking through water at the bright bodies above. Well, the currents of human passion and worldly distraction break the light that streams on us from God, and interfere

with our seeing Him in His glory. Still, we must strive to see better, we must seek His face, seek His favour, and our hearts must cry out with that of David, "I will seek Thy face evermore."

S. Paul says that when he was a child, he thought as a child, and acted as a child, but as he became a man, he put away from him childish things. How much more must we put away from us carnal things, as we strive to rise out of animal passions and animal pursuits, to the spiritual—the angelic perfection? So only can we attain to the sight of God.

Again,—the angels praise God incessantly. That, indeed, seems to be their natural instinctive work. It is no effort to them, it causes them no weariness. They praise because they are full of love and gratitude. The birds sing, not because they are set to perform for so many hours, perched on a twig, but because they are happy, and their little hearts swelling with joy compel them to burst forth into strains of music. So it is with the angels, they are not set to praise God as a duty, they do it as a delight. They cannot refrain their voices from song. We must try to attain to a similar temperament of mind, to be as full of love and gratitude as they. Indeed, we have more occasion, for Jesus Christ took not on Him the nature of angels, but of man.

So, the next thing we must strive to learn from the angels, and to cultivate, is a loving and thankful spirit. Do you love God?—Not much, I fear. You have a sort

of dead belief in God, which perhaps keeps you from committing flagrant sin, but that is all, there is no tenderness rising in the heart at the thought of God, no outflow of gratitude to Him, when He shews you some signal mercy, gives you what you do not deserve, preserves you in some danger. God is not in *all* your thoughts, and very little, if at all, in your hearts. God commanded that the fire should ever burn on His altar, and should never be extinguished. "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar, it shall never go out." (Levit. vi. 13.) Night and day, the fire glowed on the altar of the tabernacle, as the people went their journey of forty years through the wilderness. So should the fire of love burn ever in our hearts, as on altars to the Lord. Alas! we make a little blaze of chips and shavings now and then, when we offer up a few hymns and psalms to God in His church, and then let the heart grow cold, and all love and regard for God go out, and turn to dead ashes.

I have spoken of love, I must say a word also about gratitude. Have we not a thousand things to be thankful for? And do we shew real gratitude to God for them?

Look at your children, you love the little things, you caress them, you bring them presents, you are uneasy when they cry, you nurse them when sick with fond solicitude. Do they thank you for all the love that surrounds, embraces, and enriches them? Do they thank you for your self-sacrifices for their good? Not a bit, they take it all as a matter of course. It is only

afterwards, long afterwards, may be, when you are dead, that the son and daughter wake up to the knowledge and consideration of all the love shewn them, and what their parents have gone through for their sakes, and then they bitterly repent not having shewn them more gratitude when they might. We are like children, we take everything that comes to us from God as matter of course. There is no thought of the Giver, only of the pleasure afforded to yourself. But, as S. Paul says, it is time for us to put away childish things, to put away this childish want of thought, want of gratitude to the Author and Giver of all good things.

Now one thing more. The angels shew delight in prompt obedience. They serve God day and night in His heavenly temple, they go His messages, they fulfil His commands with promptitude, and they delight in doing this. We are taught to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We pray then, that as the angels shew glad alacrity in doing what God sets them to do, so may it be with us. We have all our tasks set us here, may we cultivate the angelic grace of readiness to obey the will of God, and fulfil His commands. "Teach me, O Lord," prays David, "the way of Thy statutes: and I shall keep it unto the end. Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein is my desire."

ALL SAINTS.

ECCLES. IX. 8.

“ Let thy garments be always white ; and let thy head lack no ointment.”

THERE is a striking story in the history of our country. In the year 429, the Picts and Saxons were attacked by an army of British, which had been recently baptized, and, as was then usual, wore white garments for eight days after baptism. The Saxons and Picts were devastating the country, and had encamped in a plain at Mold, in Flintshire, when from the valleys round streamed upon them the white-robed British, shouting, “ Alleluia ! ” Then the heathen Picts and Saxons, thinking that angels had descended to fight against them, fled in all directions, casting away their weapons.

There is a striking passage in the Book of Wisdom, selected by the Church for the first lesson for All Saints’ Day (Evening). “ Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond that they looked for.”

There are several passages in Scripture which shew us that at the last Judgment. when the heavens are opened and Christ appears, He will be attended by His Saints.

The prophet Zechariah gives a very graphic description of the last Judgment. "Behold the day of the Lord cometh," he says, "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." (Zech xiv. 1, 4, 5.) S. Paul says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. vi. 2); and, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men—to the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His Saints." (1 Thess. iii. 12-13.) S. Jude says, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all."

Now think of that coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with His saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. What amazement it will cause to those who persecuted the Church, to those who afflicted them, and made no account of their works and labour of love! Will it not be like the Alleluia victory again, only on a more vast and glorious scale?

There will be those who have gathered themselves together to fight against the truth; the fools, who have said in their hearts there is no God; there will be those who have resisted the grace of God, who have fallen from the faith, who have stopped their ears to the voice of con-

science; there will be those who have put stumbling-blocks in their brother's way, who have led others astray, either into erroneous belief, or into sinful ways; there will be those who have opposed the Church, who have tried to maim her power, who have denied her spiritual authority, who have striven to alienate her sons from her, who have made sects outside of her to fight against her, and schisms within to weaken her. Multitudes, multitudes, in the Valley of Decision. And then!—the heavens will be unrolled, and Christ will be seen with His gleaming Cross, and with a great shout of Alleluia! His Saints will appear with Him. Then shall the righteous ones stand on the clouds of heaven in great boldness, looking down on the shivering, shrinking herd of those who had afflicted them, and made no account of their labours. And when these latter see it, they will be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of the salvation of those whose lives they esteemed folly, so far beyond all that they had looked for. Then will they cry to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. (S. Luke xxiii. 30; Rev. vi. 16.)

We are told that there will be a double resurrection, that the saints of God shall rise first (1 Thess. iv. 16); and we are also told that blessed are they who have part in the first resurrection. (Rev. xx. 5, 6.)

Now Holy Scripture draws a distinction between the

saints who shall reign with Christ, and the nations of the saved. There will be those who shall shine as planets in the firmament of His Church, but there will be also those who shall be saved as brands plucked from the fire; saved, that is all; "saved as by fire," S. Paul says. The saints who have become perfect, who have attained to that likeness to Christ which was set before them, who have finished their course, and kept the faith, they will rise first, and come in glory with Christ to judge the rest of the world. Then will follow the second resurrection of the moderately good, and those who have been reconciled to God at last, after alienation, and also the resurrection, of the wicked. Then Christ will try all according to their deeds, their words, and their thoughts, and will pronounce on each his proper doom.

We are all called to be saints, but not all of those called walk worthy of their vocation, and though through God's mercy they may escape everlasting death, yet they hardly deserve more than admission into life, not the high and glorious thrones in the kingdom of the Resurrection.

As one star differs from another star in glory, so is the Resurrection of the dead. Some will be glorious with the glory of the sun, some with the glory of the moon, and some with the several splendours of the planets, whilst others will just shine, dim and small, mere star dust in the celestial firmament. Do not forget that all are called to be saints, but that all do not attain to sanctity, yet those who are not perfect will not be utterly excluded. The penitent

thief was saved, but we may be sure that his glory is one quite other and inferior to that of the Virgin Mother, of S. John, and S. Peter.

Of each of the tribes ten thousand were sealed, but the Apostles are to sit on thrones judging the tribes of Israel.

When the young ruler asked Christ what was necessary in order that he might enter into life, Jesus answered that he must keep the commandments. But, He added, "if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and come and follow Me." (S. Matt. xix. 21.) Here we see the difference, the good moral life entitles to admission into eternal life, but extraordinary virtue and self-renunciation alone constitute the Saint, the perfect.

And now we may ask what are the conditions of sanctity? What is that which we must do if we would be of the number of the Saints? My text gives an admirable answer to this question. "Let thy garments be always white, and let thy head lack no ointment."

Here are two points:—I. Let thy garments be always white. II. Let thy head lack no ointment. We will take them in turns.

I. "Let thy garments be always white." That is to say, keep thy baptismal robe in innocence. You will remember the parable of the man who came to the wedding supper without any wedding raiment. He was cast forth. So we, if we will be admitted to the marriage of the Lamb, to the feast of eternal blessedness prepared in heaven, must come to it in a wedding robe, in the robe

of an exterior good life. We must strive to preserve our baptismal innocence, to keep the conscience and life void of offence towards God and man, to live blameless and holy in the midst of a wicked world ; and if, by sad fall, the robe be stained, then it must be re-cleaned at once, be washed and made white, by sincere repentance, in the Blood of the Lamb.

“ Let thy garments be *always* white,” says my text. Let, that is, thy conscience never be at rest, if any stain defile thy innocence, never put off the day of repentance, thou knowest not at what hour the Master may call thee, therefore always be prepared with a white robe ; keep, if possible, thy robe white by not falling into sin, but, if thou hast fallen, then, at once, without any delay, seek the cleansing stream in which the defilement may be washed away, and the garment renewed to whiteness. In scripture two classes are represented as clothed in white, the angels, and the redeemed. The angels have never fallen, they retain, untarnished, their created purity, therefore are they represented as clothed in white. Of the redeemed are some who have kept themselves pure, and lived as the angels, but they are not many. “ Thou hast a few—in Sardis,” said Christ to the angel of that Church, “ which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” (Rev. iii. 4.) And the martyrs are represented also as given white raiment, and the holy elders are seated in white ; and the great multitude in white is made up of

those who have gone through great tribulation, and those, who, having fallen, have arisen, and washed their robes with true repentance, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Tribulation purifies and cleanses, so does repentance.

Daniel says of that time, "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." (Dan. xii. 10.) Blessed, indeed, are they who have not fallen and stained their robes, they are few, and they will walk with Christ in white, following the Lamb wherever He goeth; and blessed are they, who having fallen, rise through tribulation and repentance, and recover, as far as may be, their forfeited positions. "Some of them of understanding," said the angel to Daniel, "shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white." (xi. 35.)

II. But this is not all, there must be something more than the white garment. My text goes on to say, "Let thy head lack no ointment." By this unction is meant divine grace, of which it is a symbol.

The advice, then, given to you is this,—Be careful to maintain a life and conscience void of offence, white as spotless linen; but, also, seek a constant supply of heavenly grace, without that you will never be perfect; for religion is not a mere outward profession, it is more, it is an inward spiritual life, and that life is a life of grace. The wise and foolish Virgins were alike arrayed ready to enter into the marriage hall with the Bridegroom; they did not lack the marriage garment, but some were without grace,

the unction from on high ; they had wasted what they had once received, and had not gone to those who sell,—that is, they had not frequented the sacraments to receive more. Now we are far too ready to rely on an exterior moral life as entitling us to admission to heaven. I do not doubt that the man who has kept the commandments will be saved, but something is lacking to make him perfect ; and that is spirituality, a deep spiritual life, “hid with Christ in God,” a life that no man can understand, who is not “in the Spirit.” It is a life of grace, a life of inward communing with God, a life of heart-lifting to the source of all spiritual light, a life which is divine ; for God is a spirit, and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Now it is quite in vain for you to hope to lead this spiritual life,—to have oil for your lamps, unless you seek grace at its fountains, and these fountains are the sacraments. There you will receive the grace that quickens, that cleanses, that strengthens, that nourishes. There you will find commune with God, who is a spirit, who is the Father of spirits.

And so, in conclusion, let me say : you pray in the *Te Deum*, “Make me to be numbered with Thy saints, in glory everlasting,” but if you really desire to be of that number, and not to be merely saved, you must strive to keep your garments always white, and to let your head lack no ointment.

SCHOOL SERMON.

S. LUKE II. 40.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon Him."

IN that long period between the nativity and the manifestation at Cana of Galilee, that is for about thirty years, only once does our Lord appear on the Gospel page. Only one incident is recorded of His childhood, or early boyhood ; nothing of His life as a young man, till He begins His ministry.

And yet, twice does the Evangelist insist on the same truth, repeating the same assurance in slightly varying words. In my text we have the first statement, that the Holy Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and that the grace of God was upon Him. In the last verse of the same chapter we are told, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

But, although so little is recorded of the early life of Christ, yet we are able to fill in the outline to some extent. We know what was required of every father among the Jews ; and such requirements, we may be sure, were carried out in the household of Nazareth.

Every Jewish father was expected to subject his son to the first requirements of the law, circumcision and redemption, then to instruct him in the Law of God, and thirdly, to teach him a handicraft. (*)

We know that our blessed Lord was circumcised and presented in the temple, and we can see by His eagerness when aged twelve to be among the doctors and teachers in the temple, hearing them, and asking them questions, that He was instructed from early childhood in the Law. We know also that afterwards, in His own country, when teaching in the synagogue, His fellow countrymen despised Him; saying, "Whence hath this Man these things? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" From this we learn that He had been taught, and had practised the trade of His foster-father Joseph.

Let us now turn back and consider my text. The evangelist speaks of the growth of Christ in body, and of His waxing strong at the same time in spirit and grace.

We must never forget that in Christ were united the two natures of God and man. As God, He was all wise, all powerful, and everywhere present. As man, He was ignorant, weak and limited to the place where He found Himself. As an infant, He had an infantine body, mind, and spirit, and these grew as He waxed older, and as He grew so did the Divine illumine, fill, and strengthen the

(*) Tosaphta Kidusch, f. 30, 2.

human. Imagine a great lake with an outlet through a small pool, the waters of the great lake flow into and fill to the brim the little pool, and as this little pool is enlarged, so do the waters feeding it fill it, and always fill it *to its capacity*. So was it with the Divine and human natures in Christ, both were united, but the Divine did not obliterate the human, it filled and enlightened it, as its capacity of reception and intelligence grew.

Jesus was instructed in the Law of God. When He was twelve years old, and taken to Jerusalem, He stayed behind in the temple for three days, not solicitous for the meat that perishes, but hungering after the Word of God, which was expounded by the teachers.

We are told by Jewish writers the story of the very famous rabbi, named Hillel, who as a lad was so poor that he could not pay the small sum demanded as a fee by the teachers in the schools of the Law. Yet, so great was his hunger after the Word of God, that he was wont to climb the roof of the school, and lie by the window in the roof through which it was lighted, listening to the instruction that went on within. Now, it fell out one winter morning, that the Rabbi who was teaching found the room become so dark that he could no longer read, so he looked up, and discovered that the window was obscured by a dark object. Then he sent his disciple to the roof, and lo! there lay Hillel under a mass of snow which had fallen as he lay listening; as he lay, and the snow had powdered over him, he became unconscious, and

the snow gathered deeper and deeper till he was as one frozen and dead. Then he was brought down, and with difficulty revived.

After that, when Jewish Rabbis would urge their pupils to zeal in their learning, and love for the law of God, they would say, "Remember Hillel, who lay on the roof to listen till he was buried in snow."

I think that we Christians may also learn from Hillel to have zeal for the law of God, and above all may we learn the same from the example of our Lord Jesus Christ as a child in the temple. He who said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," shews us the example of earnestness, and a craving for the spiritual food of God's word. He who inspired David to say, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. xcix. 105), shews Himself that He seeks this guidance. Poor instructors those doctors were, nevertheless, He the Divine Teacher sits humbly at their feet, listening to them, and enquiring of them the meaning of the sacred words. Truly might He say, with David, "I am wiser than My teachers," yet, as a child, He sits humbly before them as a learner.

"Jesus increased in wisdom and stature."

We are three-fold. We are made up of Body, Mind, and Soul, and each has its life, its growth, and its nutriment by which it grows.

You parents are proud to mark the growth of your

children's bodies. You take care to provide them with the necessary food, and fresh air, and clothing ; and, may be, on the child's birthday, you mark its height on the wall with a pencil, and next year mark again, and then say, "See ! how much John, or Mary, or Jane has grown in the year !" You are pleased to note it. The child's mind grows. It is provided with proper education at school, and it passes from one Standard to another. You are glad to hear that your child is out of the first Standard and into the second, and then has risen from the second to the third, and so on. Now the body goes on growing only till it has reached maturity, then it is for a while at a stand-still ; after that, it declines in power and vigour, grows old, and wastes away. But the mind grows long after the body has ceased to grow. Indeed, our minds are all growing now, and it is only in extreme old age that they cease to gain anything. We learn something fresh continually, we acquire new experiences, we become wiser and more intelligent as we get on in life ; and every year we may fairly say that we know more than we knew last year.

Now the soul grows like the mind, it does not of a necessity stop growth with the body. It may go on and on in its growth till the day of death ; and after that we cannot doubt but that its growth will continue. What do I mean by the growth of the soul ? I do not mean growth in size, but growth in spiritual knowledge, and in the grace of God. This is what is said of the Lord Jesus

“He waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom ; and the grace of God was upon Him.”

You would think it a very cruel thing to deny your children the food they need, and to stunt them in their growth, by giving them insufficient, or improper nourishment. So, in the same way, that the mind may be properly fed, the State provides that there shall be properly qualified schools and teachers, and a Government Inspector comes round annually to see that the minds of the children in every parish are given proper food, in proper quantities, so that their minds may grow. And, in after life, every sensible person is anxious to improve his mind, that is, to learn something more than he knew before, so as to become a more accomplished, and a wiser man.

Now you see how careful we are about our bodies, and about our minds. Are we as solicitous about our souls? But if we educate the mind, and let the body grow healthy, and neglect the soul, then we are very imperfect creatures; one of the very best parts of us, indeed the highest and noblest part of us is stunted and starved. It is precisely the possession of the soul which sets us so immeasurably above the beasts. They have bodies, and they have minds, not much beneath the uncultured minds of savages ; but they have not the soul, which is the Breath of God.

Just ask yourselves candidly : Do you care about the nourishment and growth of your souls ? Have you any hunger and thirst after God's truth, any spiritual yearnings,

any spiritual love ? The soul ought not to be at a stand-still, or going backwards and down hill. Yet it is so in many of you. You have less spiritual consciousness than when you were children. God's truth is less real to you ; it is less easy for you to think of God, and to pray to Him. This is very sad. The soul ought to be growing daily in the thought and love of God. It ought daily to be craving more and more for divine things, and be more and more indifferent to the things of this perishable world. Where is there anything approaching to the eagerness of Hillel for the truth of God ? Where a trace of that eager, enquiring mind that brought our Lord to sit in the temple for three days after His mother and kinsfolk had set out on their return journey to Nazareth ? I wish I could see it in the children. I wish I could see it among those grown-up. Only here and there do we find one who is naturally fond of learning, but how much rarer is it to find one who is eager after the learning of spiritual things ! "Verily I say unto you," said our blessed Lord, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (S. Matt. xviii. 3.) The child is full of interest and inquisitiveness. It is always asking questions. So, in spiritual things, we must be filled with the inquiring eager spirit, that will not rest till it knows God's truth, and has looked into the law of God.

Do not forget,—and this is my word to you in conclusion,—that the perfect development of the whole

nature is only complete when the soul is educated as well as mind and body. This we are liable to overlook, and yet it is most important. Therefore, an education of the mind only, without the simultaneous drawing forth of the powers of the soul, is only half doing the work of training a child. Better half, than not at all; but do not suppose that half is all, and rest satisfied therewith. It is the soul that sees God, the soul that has spiritual aspirations, the soul that grows in heavenly grace, and puts on the image of God. Without spiritual culture your children may grow up very clever, but they will not grow up like Christ. They will grow up perfectly capable to make the most of the opportunities in this world, but perfectly unfitted for the life in the world to come.

HARVEST THANKSGIVING. ()*

Ps. CXXII. 4.

"Thither the tribes go up."

IN the tenth chapter of the First Book of Kings we have an account of the visit paid by the Queen of Sheba to Solomon. Far away in her Ethiopian home, among the rocky ranges that feed the sources of the Blue Nile, in a bare and poor land, she had heard of the wealth and wisdom of the great king at Jerusalem, and she was curious to hear his wisdom, to test his knowledge, and to see his splendour.

"She came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not."

Then, after she had proved his wisdom, she looked round on his palace, and admired its magnificence; its

* With a little alteration at the end this may be converted into a Dedication Festival Sermon.

cedar pillars and roof; its targets of beaten gold hung upon the walls; his throne of ivory overlaid with gold, with the twelve lions on the steps that ascended to it. She wondered at his trains of workmen under five hundred and fifty overseers; his army of fighting men with shields of brass, and chariots, and horses; his attendants in their gay and splendid uniforms; his richly and daintily provided table, with delicacies from all parts. She saw, and wondered over, we are told, "the house that he had built, and the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers."

This splendour was wondrous to her eyes; accustomed to simplicity in her own mountain home. It dazzled her, as her mind was dazzled by the learning of Solomon, who knew the name of every plant, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, and by his wisdom which read her difficulties, and advised her rightly. But still—she felt that something was wanting. This splendour was overwhelming, this might over-aweing, this learning surprising, and this wisdom extraordinary; still, something lacked. In her rude mind she felt it—a want of something more. Listen to what Scripture says of her: "When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon *concerning the Name of the Lord*, she came to prove him."

All she had seen was very magnificent and wondrous, but it appealed only to her sense of the gorgeous and the gigantic, and she had seen nothing yet that spoke of some-

thing above the pride of life, and the pomp of this world, and the profundity of human learning.

Evening draws on, the sun had just begun to disappear behind the western hills, when, as from above, there burst on her ear the blast of silver trumpets. Then the king broke off his discourse. He rose from his ivory throne, descended the six steps, and with his guards going before and his attendants encompassing and following, he passed out of the court of his palace, and went towards the house of the Lord.

The Queen of Sheba stood with her hands clasped, looking on in wonder. Before her, on the height of Mount Moriah stood the glorious temple, blazing in the setting sunlight, and to it led a long stair, broken into terraces or landing places. On these terraces stood choirs of harpers, and singers, and musicians, with trumpets and psalteries. The glittering procession began to ascend the stair cut in the rock. The Queen looked on. The sun had set on the lower town, and the purple shadows were gathering in the valley of Siloam ; but still Moriah was bathed in the orange evening sun, and the brazen shields and helmets of the guards flashed in the light. Solomon wore his golden mantle, and a circlet of gold was on his hair, and the many-coloured raiment of his attendants formed a moving rainbow about him. He reached the first platform, and at once there burst forth a hymn of supplication to God, infinitely pathetic. "When I was in trouble, I called upon the Lord, and He heard

me:" the hundred and twentieth psalm; and when she heard this sweet and touching strain the tears rose in the Queen's heart, and were near to overflow.

Now I must explain to you that there are fifteen Psalms, that is to say, the one hundred and twentieth to the one hundred and thirty-fourth, which are called Songs of Degrees, titles or Songs of the Steps. Various explanations of these have been given, but the most probable, and one which is sustained by Jewish traditions is, that they were psalms recited, and on solemn occasions sung, on the ascent to the house of God. Originally, there were not so many as fifteen. Some of these psalms are certainly later, and date from a time after the return from captivity. Then, probably, the steps in the stair leading up to the re-built temple were made more numerous, and the flights of steps less long; and for the purpose of giving a psalm to each platform of the degrees, fresh psalms were added.

Now let us return to the Queen of Sheba. She has heard the psalm—it is a short one—die away as the evening shadow steals up the hill; but see!—the procession is again in motion, and moves with the sun up the height, and when Solomon has reached the second stage, again the harps, and psalteries, and the trumpets, and human voices, burst forth from the white-robed choirs on the second platform, and sing, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills: from whence cometh my help. My help cometh even from the Lord: who hath made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be

moved : and He that keepeth thee will not sleep." I think you will hardly appreciate the beauty of the psalms of degrees unless you read them with the thought in your mind of them as sung on the ascent to God's temple from the town below,—then their full significance comes out.

At last, as the evening sun was bathing the temple, and all below was in shade, the topmost platform,—the great level place, was reached, on which the temple stood ; and there, at its golden gates, between the gleaming polished brazen pillars, stood the Priests and Levites. At once there burst from the choirs, and from all, the last joyous psalm, " Behold now, praise the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord ; ye that by night stand in the house of the Lord : even in the courts of the house of our God. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary : and praise the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth give thee blessing out of Sion." Then there rose into the still air a little column of white smoke,—the smoke of the evening sacrifice.

When the Queen of Sheba had seen and heard this, then she covered her face with her hands, and she sank on her knees and wept from out her full heart. We read, " When she saw his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the Lord, there was no more spirit in her." She said to the king afterwards, " It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it ; and, behold, the half was not told me."

No!—the best half had not been fully told her. All his splendour and wisdom had been talked about, and wondered over ; but, that he, the mighty king, should humble himself before the King of kings, that he, the wise, should raise suppliant hands to Him, who is the All-Wise, that he, the mighty, should publicly adore the Lord, the Almighty, as the source of his power, his only strength and stability,—this, she had not heard. This it was which touched her above everything else. She had marvelled at his magnificence, and the extent of his knowledge, and his military power ; but this, his ascent whereby he went up to the house of the Lord, overcame her altogether ; it appealed to her soul, to the innate yearning after God. “The half,”—the best half, had not been told her, and it was this that stirred her to tears.

And, my brethren, this is the real and best part of life — this recognition of God as our refuge and strength, the source of all our wealth, our protection in time of adversity. Martha served Jesus when He was on earth, caring for the things of the house, that all should be in order, and that everything should be suitable for the reception of such a guest. She did well, but Mary did better, who, when He was come, sat at His feet and looked up to Him, and listened to the words of life. “Martha, Martha,” He said to her, “thou art careful : and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke x. 41, 42.) Martha was working for Him, it was for Him

that she was cumbered with much serving ; but we—are careful and cumbered with the work necessary for ourselves ; how we may feed ourselves, how we may heap up riches, how we may shew ourselves to the best advantage, how we may push our prospects,—that is serving ourselves, and how little there is of Mary's listening to the voice of Christ, how little of that humble worship, how little of meditation on divine things, and yet—this is the best part that will not be taken away. When death comes everything else fails, all the work that has been done advantages no more ; but that good part, that half—the worship of God, the spiritual homage, and heartiness, that remains. Death cannot deprive man of that. We are obliged to care a great deal for the things of this life. We would do wrongly if we neglected them. We have to work for our livelihood, to work for our families, to cultivate our minds, to think and care for much that only concerns this life—this is unavoidable. But then, let not that be *all*, let it be only a part. Solomon, if he had been but a great king, and wealthy and wise, would have impressed the Queen of Sheba ; but that which touched her soul to the quick, was that she saw he was a religious man as well, that he gave God the glory and honour for all he had, and acknowledged that all he had he had out of God's mercy, who giveth and taketh away as seemeth best to Himself. Over against Solomon stands king Nebuchadnezzar. He also was a mighty and wealthy monarch. He walked one day in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon, and, “ the

king spake, and said : Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ? ” (Dan. iv. 30.) He gave not God the glory, and therefore was cast forth to eat grass like the ox, till he was humbled, and looked up to God as the One all-powerful, who lifteth up one and casteth down another. Over against Solomon stands also king Herod. “ Upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying : It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.” (Acts xii. 21-23.)

You have, in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, one boasting in the multitude of his riches ; in that of Herod, one boasting himself in his wisdom ; and they gave not God the glory. In Solomon you have one wealthier than Nebuchadnezzar, and wiser than Herod, doing homage to God as the author of all the good he enjoys.

I am glad to see you here to-day. The harvest is over. The toils of the year are ended. I am glad to see the tribes come up to the house of the Lord,—the landlord, who owns the ground, the farmer who rents it, the labourer who tills it, all live on the soil, and all are now here to acknowledge it ; they look to God as the giver of the harvest plenty. I am glad to see you here, and I hope that in heart you rise to the author of all goodness,

and thank Him for what He has done for you. Believe me, it is a sight that must strike those who have any natural feeling in them, the ascent by which you go up to the house of the Lord. You have much for which you may be thankful ; some have wealth, some great natural shrewdness, some learning, some comforts denied to others, some great domestic happiness. Men may wonder at, and envy your possession of these things, but they will be touched to the heart when they see you turn and ascend to the house of the Lord, there to fall low before His footstool, and give Him thanks and praise for the mercies shewn you, and beseech a continuance of them.

CLUB SERMON.

I COR. XII. 20.

"Now are they many members, yet but one body."

WE read in ancient Roman history that at one time the army and a large number of the citizens were discontented, thinking themselves aggrieved, and so they left Rome, and went away to a mountain about three miles from the city, where they encamped. The senate, or parliament, met and discussed their grievances, they would remedy some, but not all, for some of the demands made by the people were unreasonable and incompatible with the welfare of the state. Then messengers were sent to the people, but they would not return to the town unless they were given all they wanted. They complained that they had to fight all the wars, to till the land, to do all the hard work, and that the rulers remained at home, were not exposed to danger in battle, nor had manual labour to occupy them; they would therefore pay no taxes, and fight no more battles. Then the senate sent to the malcontents a man of the people named Menucius Agrippa, and he reasoned with them in this fashion, "In times of old, when every part of the body could think for itself, and each had a separate will of its own, they all, by common consent,

resolved to revolt against the belly ; they knew no reason, they said, why they should toil from morning to night in its service, while it did nothing but receive and fatten on what they provided. The feet vowed they would carry it no longer, the hands vowed they would feed it no more, and the teeth averred they would not chew a morsel of meat though it were placed between them. Thus resolved, they all for some time shewed their spirit, and kept their word ; but soon they found that instead of mortifying the belly by these means, they only undid themselves ; they languished for a while, and perceived, when too late, that it was owing to the belly that they had strength to work, or courage to mutiny." When the speaker had narrated this fable, the application of which was so obvious the effect on the people was instantaneous ; they unanimously cried out that Agrippa should lead them back to Rome.

There can be no doubt that this incident of history was in S. Paul's mind when he was writing the passage from which I have taken my text. He says,—I will give you his version of the fable.—"As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? If the whole body were an

eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

You see how S. Paul takes this fable of the body and the members and turns it to his purpose. Agrippa told it with reference to the state, and the various parts thereof. The Apostle tells it of the Church, and the various members of that.

Now there seem to be two great lessons taught by this story. First, we must keep unity among ourselves. Secondly, we must each fulfil our several duties, in the several spheres in which they lie.

1. We may fairly say that love and unity is the main lesson of Christianity. When Christ appeared among His

Apostles after His resurrection, the first word He spoke to them was, "Peace be unto you!" And He would have His disciples keep peace one with another. "Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity," said David, and S. John the Apostle says, as the sum of Gospel teaching, "Love one another." We are, indeed, told, that when S. John was a very old man of nearly a hundred, so old that he could not walk, and could only speak with difficulty, he had himself carried through the streets of Ephesus, repeating as he went, to all about him, "Little children, love one another."

"By this shall all men know," said our Blessed Lord Himself, "that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

You see for yourself that the only way in which peace can be maintained in a family is by keeping the bond of love. If there be bickering and strife in the house, then peace flies from it, happiness goes, and prosperity is likely to leave also. What is more blessed and beautiful than a home where family love is perfect, where all are united by tender regard for each other, where each is ready to give way to the other, and all seek not themselves, but the welfare of the whole family? It is the same in the state, there prosperity goes hand in hand with unity. A state torn to pieces by factions, is not a strong state, it has the elements of decay in it. So also must the Church be united, and love and mutual forbearance form the bond of unity in her.

So also must it be with every voluntary association of men together, every society or club. The great requisite of its success is that it shall be at unity; that a kindly feeling shall prevail among the members, that there shall be avoidance of narrowness, discord and self-seeking.

II. The next lesson we learn is the duty of each member doing to his utmost the duty imposed on him. Each member of the body in its several way is useful, and has its special work. The eyes see, the ears hear, the mouth eats, the hand grasps, the foot walks. It is the same in the state, there some are carpenters, others masons, others painters, others soldiers, others have shops, some weave, others till the ground, some are writers, others printers, some administer the law, others frame the laws, and so on; there are endless ways in which men work. Now the welfare of the state depends on each doing his own work. If all were carpenters, what should we do for masons, and painters, and tillers of the soil? If all were agriculturists, what should we do for houses in which to live? If there were no soldiers, we should have our country over-run by enemies. All are necessary. Each has his proper work.

It is the same thing in the Church. There also there are the several offices. "God," says S. Paul, "hath set some in the Church; first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that, miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of

miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues?"

There is an amusing story told, which I daresay you have heard, of the husband and the wife who were both discontented with their work; the husband disliked his work in the fields, and grumbled because his wife had an easy time of it in the house, and the wife was out of temper with her work in the house, and envied her husband his out-of-door work on the farm. So they changed duties one day, and the story goes on to tell the difficulties into which both fell, and how heartily glad they were at the end of the day to return to their proper duties.

Well, my brethren, we have to set before us the plain duties which we find to hand, set us by God, and not to be discontented and neglect them, because we think we can do better elsewhere, engaged on other matters; but, do, and do well, whatsoever is set us as our task. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," says the Preacher, "do it with thy might."

Now, in conclusion, try to remember the lessons set you this day in the fable of the Body and its Members. These lessons, I have shewn you, are two-fold. We must not think of, and care for, and act for ourselves alone, and hold ourselves independent of others, for that we cannot be, that we were never intended to be. We are members one of another. We belong to a common body; and Christian Charity is the bond of union which holds all together in unity.

Next, remember that the welfare of the whole body depends greatly on each member discharging, to the utmost of his power, his duty in that state in which he finds himself, by doing that which is his duty, whether in the State, or in the Church, or in his family, or in his Club, thoroughly and heartily.

I saw once, scratched on the window pane of a farm house parlour, the word, "Thorough." O let us score that word on our hearts, so that whatever we do, it may not be done imperfectly, but thoroughly.

END OF VOL. II.

SERMONS BY S. BARING GOULD, M.A.

FIRST SERIES OF VILLAGE PREACHING

FOR A YEAR. A complete collection of 65 specially-written Short Sermons for ALL THE SUNDAYS and CHIEF HOLYDAYS of the Christian year, MISSIONS, SCHOOLS, HARVEST, CLUB, &c. ; with a supplement of TWENTY SERMON SKETCHES.

This complete and excellent series of Sermons forms a perfect store-house of Teaching, Illustration and Anecdote for the Whole Year, and will be found an invaluable aid to the Preacher in Country Towns and Villages.

Complete in 2 vols., elegant cloth, 10/-, by post 10/6.
Vol. I. separately, from *Advent to Whit-Sunday*, 5/-, by post 5/4
Vol. II. separately, miscellaneous, from *Trinity to Advent*, also 20 *Sermon Sketches* } 5/-, by post 5/4

"Thoroughly excellent, and admirably calculated to excite the interest of a village congregation, while the great doctrines of the Christian Faith are clearly and boldly set forth"—*Guardian*.

"They are exquisite, most suggestive, and among the most remarkable sermons of the day."—*Literary Churchman*.

"Sound in doctrine, vigorous and telling in expression, devout in feeling, yet abounding in illustration and anecdote."—*John Bull*.

"We strongly recommend them to the Clergy, who will gather from them many a hint how to make use of anecdote, illustration, scraps of personal experience, &c., in their pulpit teaching. . . . Always interesting and effective."—*Church Times*.

"Short, sketchy, and wonderfully graphic—model sermons."
—*English Churchman*.

"These brilliant sermons will be really valuable to the clergy, they suggest innumerable novel trains of thought, and their illustrations are lavish and singularly beautiful."—*Church Quarterly*.

VILLAGE PREACHING FOR SAINTS' DAYS.

A specially-written set of 21 Short Plain Sermons for ALL THE SAINTS' DAYS. Uniform with the same author's "Village Preaching for a Year," to which it forms the THIRD AND COMPLETING VOLUME. One volume, fcap. cloth, price 4/-, post free for 4/3.

The publishers are glad by the issue of this Volume to be able to comply with the numerous requests they have received for the Saints' Day Sermons to complete Mr. Baring-Gould's former vols. of Village Preaching for the Sundays.

By the Rev. S. Baring-Gould (*continued*).

THE VILLAGE PULPIT. COMPLETE FOR THE
WHOLE YEAR, in 2 vols., 10/-, by post 10/8. Or—

Vol. I. separately, ADVENT TO WHIT-SUNDAY, 5/-, by post 5/4.

Vol. II. „ TRINITY TO ADVENT, 5/-, by post 5/4

This useful work contains Sermons, or Outline Sermons, for the whole year. The outlines are so full as almost to form complete short Sermons in themselves, while THEY ARE FULL OF ILLUSTRATIONS, ANECDOTES, and useful matter drawn from Lives and Writings of the Saints, the Fathers, etc., as well as from modern everyday life and experience, and they form a perfect storehouse of original thoughts and ideas for the Preacher in Villages, Country Towns, &c.

“May be profitably used either for devotional readings or as supplying material for use in the composition of Sermons.”—*Guardian*.

“These ‘Village Pulpit Sermons’ are composed in terse and telling sentences, are full of anecdote or illustration, and in no way shrink from calling a spade a spade, for plain speaking is one of the characteristics of the Author’s style.”—*Church Times*.

“The Preacher cannot easily find models more useful or available.”
Church Review.
“Two remarkable volumes. . . Pointed and telling in the extreme, models of manner, and storehouses of matter.”—*Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

SERMONS TO CHILDREN. A specially-written Series. Twenty-three in number, including a Set of Six on CHILDREN’S DUTIES AND FAULTS (Tidiness, Idleness, Wilfulness, Obedience, Perseverance, Idle Talk, etc.), and also a Set of Four on the Seasons of the Year. The very practical lessons of everyday life, combined with the picturesque language, the rich store of anecdotes, and the unflagging interest of these Sermons, will render them not only useful in Church, but most valuable and instructive for School Readings, or Prizes, or for Birthday or other Home Gift Books for children of all ages and classes. Fifth Edition. Cloth, price 3/6, by post 3/10.

“These are really sermons suited for children. Alike in mode of thought, simplicity of language, and lessons conveyed; and they are very beautiful. No mere critical description can do justice to the charm with which spiritual and moral lessons are made to flow—(not merely are drawn)—out of natural facts or objects. Stories, too, are without exception sound and admirable. We cannot doubt that the volumes will be, and will remain, a standard favourite.”—*Church Quarterly*.

SERMONS BY H. J. WILMOT BUXTON.

SUNDAY SERMONETTES FOR A YEAR,

Being a complete set of Short Sermons for all the Sundays and some of the chief Holy-days of the Christian Year. A most useful and interesting volume. Cr. 8vo, cloth, 5/-, by post 5/4.

SERMONS TO CHILDREN, entitled "THE

CHILDREN'S BREAD." This most successful volume is really suited for children. It is full of anecdotes illustrating its practical lessons. and the Publishers confidently recommend it. 3/6, by post 3/9.

Price 5/-, by post 5/4.

THE LIFE WORTH LIVING. Cr. 8vo., cloth, 5/-,

by post 5/4. A Vol. of 24 Plain Sermons, replete with Anecdotes, Illustrations, etc., and most suitable for Village Congregations, or for evening Sermons in large towns. Including A COMPLETE COURSE FOR ADVENT, on "The Four Last Things," besides other Church Seasons, and many general Sermons. Among the contents are The Conquering Life, the Courageous Life, The Consistent Life, The Rejoicing Life, The Patient Life, The Tempted Life, The Persevering Life, The Praising Life, The Praying Life, Bible Reading, Confirmation, The Message of the Church Bells, A Common Sin, etc. By post 5/4.

"Is fully equal to the former productions of this gifted preacher. No listeners or readers either of such discourses as these could ever complain of dulness. The whole four and twenty abound in happily chosen illustrations and anecdotes, both new and old."—*Church Times*.

"Are, as usual, vigorous and stirring. He does not make his anecdotes unduly prominent; his teaching is often enforced with a pungent terseness of manner which is very telling; and his Churchmanship is clear and decisive."—*Guardian*.

"Strikingly original, and have a current of earnest, solid piety running through the whole which may be worthily imitated."

—*Ecclesiastical Gazette*.

PARABLE SERMONS FOR CHILDREN. Cr.

8vo, cloth, 3s. 6d., by post 3s. 9d.

New Edition, just out, 7s. 6d., by post 8s.

MISSION SERMONS FOR A YEAR. Including

68 SHORT PLAIN SERMONS for every Sunday; a few Saints' Days, Harvest, Missions, Funeral, Dedication, Festival, etc.

"These sermons are excellent in matter and in style, simple and pure in diction, and perfectly intelligible, without being thin or shallow. They are excellent Sunday morning sermons for almost any kind of congregation."—*Church Bells*.

London: W. SKEFFINGTON & Son, 163, Piccadilly, W.



